

FIFTY EIGHT
SERMONS

Preached out of the

FIRST LESSONS
OF EVERY
SUNDAY *in the* YEAR,
At Evening Prayer.

WITH AN *B L g*
APPENDIX of SIX SERMONS
Upon Morning Lessons, added to compleat
the Course of the two first Volumes.

By WILLIAM READING, M. A.
Keeper of the LIBRARY at *Sion-College.*

VOL. III.

LONDON:
Printed by J. WATTS, for the AUTHOR.
MDCCXXX.

FIFTY EIGHT
SERMONS

Preached out of the



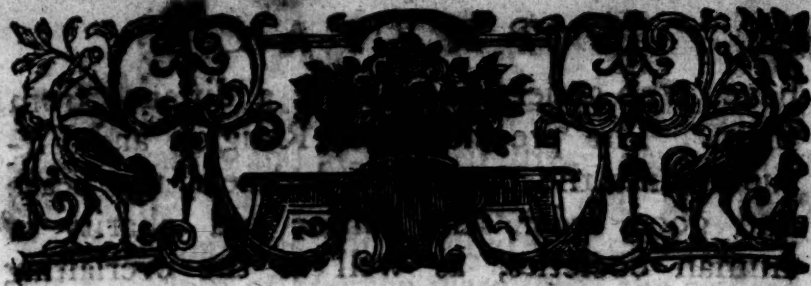
At Evening Prayer.

WITH AN
APPENDIX of SIX SERMONS
Upon Morning Prayers, added to complete
the Course of the two first Volumes.

By WILLIAM READING, M.A.
Keeper of the Library at New College.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
Printed by J. Watts, for the Author.
MDCCLXXX



**TO MY
DEAR BRETHREN,**

*The Inferior Clergy of the Church of
ENGLAND.*

DEARLY BELOVED,

I Presume to salute you by the style of Inferiors, not in comparison of my self, who am in as low a station as perhaps any man now living, of my age and standing and attendance in our Church. Nor do I intend to derogate from the importance of your ministrations in the House of God. For upon whom are the eyes of all our Lord's people? are they not upon you, whom he hath appointed over them, to give them their spiritual food in due season? By your Tongues the Gospel is preached, by your Hands the Sacraments are administered to all ranks and conditions of men amongst us. By your daily communications with your Flocks, you must needs have a stronger influence upon them, than your Superiors can have

iv *The* P R E F A C E.

have, who generally reside at a distance from them. The prevalence of Religion and Virtue against the powers of darkness, the peace and good order, the justice and charity of human Societies, as well as the everlasting salvation of mankind, do all very much depend upon a faithful discharge of your duties. By your preaching and examples men are inspired with the fear and love of God; and by your prayers the divine Blessings are drawn down upon men.

To the effectual performance of which duties, what so conducive as the lowness of your stations, and narrowness of your sphere in the Church? by which you are confined to a constant neighbourhood and fellowship with your people, to be always moving in their view. For you have neither distant Seats of Inheritance, nor variety of Ecclesiastical Dignities and Revenues, to occasion your frequent removals from them. And you are consequently exempt from the temporal cares which attend such Revenues, and from the obligations which you would lie under to the Patrons of such Dignities; and so are entirely at liberty to serve him who hath commanded you to call no man upon earth your Master.

THIS, Brethren, is what I would presume to suggest to you. I would gladly eradicate that beloved opinion, which operates with some more powerfully than an article of faith; That the favour of the great men of this world, is the only fountain of riches and honours. In pursuance of which maxim, what crowds of

The PREFACE.

us do I see about their gates? what attendance at their tables and at all their diversions? What a guard do such attendants keep over all their words and actions both sacred and civil, (as if the Kingdom of Heaven were to be the reward of their circumspection) that nothing may escape them which may seem to reprove the principles or practice of their revered Masters? Insomuch that it would be hard to find any thing in the character of an *Artotrogus* or a *Gnatbo* so cautious and complaisant as is the behaviour of these men-pleasers.

By such a behaviour as this, we flatly contradict almost every page of our sacred Oracles, and are far enough, in the end, from crowning such labours with any degree of true riches or honours. For pray observe how many Histories you have read of those who being ordained Ministers of God, have made themselves much more eminently the Servants of Men; how by a too late repentance they have bemoaned their prevarications, and wished they had been true to their religious Vows; and how faded and nauseous are those short-lived flowers (or rather weeds) of earthly favours, which they gathered so studiously to adorn their monuments. The same sentiments might you see, if you could see what is written in the hearts, or what will be written in Books, of all men-pleasers to the end of the world.

ON the contrary, what was it which ennobled the poor Prophets and Apostles of old, and caused their names to shine like Stars of the

VI The PREFACE.

first magnitude, in the records of everlasting Glory? Was it not that entire freedom of serving God, which they maintained by being content with the hair-cloth, the leathern girdle, and the diet of locusts, *i. e.* any mean food and raiment which would satisfy nature, and keep them from purchasing the favours of men with the honour of their great Master in Heaven? This their unshaken adherence to the divine Will, their contempt of all earthly Rewards in comparison of God's Favour, their impartial reproving of Sin without respect of persons, gained them more veneration even in the minds of the most guilty Offenders, than any perfidious Teachers who were known to betray their trust, could ever attain to. And I question not but the Devil himself reverences those holy Saints of God, who have bravely resisted him, and sacrificed themselves in withstanding his fiery darts, while with the greatest scorn he strips the gawdy traitor of those ornaments which he got here by sinful compliances.

I can never be of that man's mind who said, *Happier is that piece of wood which is carved into an image, and set up to be worshipped, than that which is used to make the fire.* I esteem it, I know it to be infinitely more glorious and advantageous, to light the fire upon God's Altar, and raise the flame of a holy Zeal in the hearts of his People by my religious Ministrations, than to be diverted from such service by the enjoyment of all the Kingdoms of this World and the Glories thereof.

THE

The PREFACE. VII

THE business of our Calling, Brethren, is to be Masters in the spiritual *Israel*, the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, where we have a large field of Dignities and Revenues before us, such as they who are most willing to oppress us with poverty and contempt, cannot withhold from us. How contrary such oppressors act to the Laws of Christ, which provide that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel, I may take occasion to shew hereafter at large. In the mean time let us look up to the Lord of this Kingdom, who hath graciously promised, that when we go forth upon his Mission without purse or scrip, he will take care that we shall want nothing which is needful for us. In full assurance of this promise let us gird up our loins, and apply with all our might to finish the work which he hath given us to do.

Our diligent application is the only ground, upon which we can build any rational hope of obtaining the promised Blessing. Alas, the pains which are commonly taken, have been too long tried, and found to fall short of the desired effect. Corruptions in faith and manners prevail against us, and the voice of blasphemers grows louder than ever: And wherefore? We need consult no other Oracles but the Forms of our Ordinations for a reason of all this.

I wish we would all resolve to read over those Forms once a month for some years together, that we might never lose (as we too commonly do) the memory of those promises and vows

which we then made, and took the holy Sacrament upon them, to order our lives and studies according to the rules which are there laid down, and were then solemnly charged upon us.

I crave leave to lay before you the abridgment which Dr. *Nicholls* has given us of the Bishop's charge at the Ordination of Priests. This excellent Exhortation, says he, contains, *First*, an Admonition to the persons to be ordained, that they consider the great weight and importance of their employment, which is to make provision for Christ's family, and to seek for his lost sheep; and also the danger of neglecting their duty, since all miscarriages which shall happen thro' their negligence, shall be severely required at their hands. *Secondly*, That they use the utmost of their diligence in the discharge of their Function, That they may discharge their consciences by performing the duty required of them; That they may make a thankful return to their gracious Master, who has advanced them to so honourable an office; and that they may avoid the giving occasion of other persons transgressing their duty after their example. And *lastly*, It suggests to them the means they should make use of, to enable them to discharge their duty aright; which are, to pray for the assistance of God's holy Spirit, diligently to study the holy Scriptures, to lead a life of exemplary Piety, and to avoid, as much as may be, all secular business and study.

THE same Dr. *Nicholls* observes upon the Preface to the Ordination-offices, how admirably St. *Chrysostom* sets forth the use which the diligent study of holy Scripture is of to all Clergymen, in his book of the Christian Priesthood; which can never be read often enough by persons of our function. This book is published in *Greek* and *Latin* by Mr. *John Hughes*, and lately rendred into *English* by Mr. *Henry Hollier*, and makes an octavo of about four shillings or a crown price. Which being easy both to be purchased and perused, I hope no Clergyman will be long without it, who is desirous to know his Duty and to do it.

SINCE I wrote this Preface, I am obliged to insert the following passage. I have been at a Visitation held by the Right Reverend *Edmund* Lord Bishop of *London*, at *St. Paul's*, May 28, 1730. where I heard his charge to his Clergy; which, without being prejudiced in his favour (for which I have no cause) I think was so full to the honour of God, and the present state and circumstances of Religion amongst us, that I heartily wish it may be printed, and hope it will appear in the World before these two Books of Sermons; and then not only every Clergyman, but any person who can read *English*, will reap great benefit by the perusal of it.

Now this, dearly beloved, brings us to the point which I chiefly aim at. If we can but prevail with our selves to sit down every day and search the holy Scriptures, we shall by degrees find more pleasure in them, than in any

The PREFACE

any other kind of imployment or diversion. And when we are pleased with them our selves, we shall endeavour to render them delightful and useful to our People. For we shall evermore experience the truth of that holy Gospel, that *out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak.* You may certainly know a man by his communication. The earthly man speaks of the earth; the things of the body are what he most delights to discourse of: but he who is of God, speaks the words of God. Out of the good treasure of his heart he brings forth good things, while the tongue of the vain man is continually proclaiming his vanity.

THIS, I say, is the good fruit which will spring up in us from a diligent study of the Word of God; it will gradually fill us with just notions of his divine Majesty, with his love and fear, with a sense of his Presence, with a zeal for his Glory, with the graces and virtues of his holy Spirit.

SUCH fruits must appear, and eminently flourish in us, if we will maintain the character of Divines and Spiritual Men. We shall never be able to spiritualize others in the exercise of our Ministry, if we our selves are earthly and sensual; we shall never kindle in the People a zeal for the things of God, while we show our selves cold and indifferent about them.

BUT if we would but be true and faithful to the vows which we have taken upon us, if we would but apply our selves to commune

with

with God and meditate in his Word, to pray and preach and perform all the offices of our Ministry with that constancy, sincerity, and devotion which the laws of our Profession require of us, what glorious effects would such a Spirit of God in us be able to produce? The Devil and his Instruments are afraid of nothing so much as of this Spirit. They are constantly upon the watch to suppress and quench it, as a fire which will destroy their Kingdom. They are incessantly pouring out a sea of reproach, contempt and blasphemy upon it, in which they are assisted by a sort of people, who yet would be thought friends to the Christian Ministry; nay sometimes by the Ministers themselves; whom I wish I had never heard speaking too highly of their own sacred Administrations, and even declaiming against Preaching as a work which might be excluded both from the Press and the Pulpit. Whereas I affirm, that nothing is so apt to soften the hard hearts of worldly men, to convince them of sin, to enlighten them with the saving knowledge of God, and enflame them with the love of Piety and Virtue, as this work, when rightly performed.
 Good Preaching is an effectual means to bring people to the publick Prayers and Worship of God. And tho' some may resort to it at the first, more out of curiosity than devotion, yet by the hearing of the ear, the understanding will in time be enlightened, and the heart affected and warmed with the things of God. You know how our Lord compares his

his Gospel to seed sown in the ground, which lies buried for a while as if it were quite lost, but afterwards springs up to a great encrease of fruit. Even so must we plow and sow in hope. We must not be discouraged at the hardness of mens hearts, the deadness of their faith, the dulness of their apprehension. For tho' there are many who are like stony and thorny ground, that will not bring forth fruit to perfection; yet many who now seem to be such, will not prove such in the end. There is a time when the Father of Spirits will regenerate their affections, and create a new and clean heart within them; which tho' it may seem tedious to us, yet let us not grow weary nor abate of our diligence; for at length we may see the fruits of our labours with pleasure and satisfaction.

WHAT a satisfaction must it be to us to be Instruments in God's hands of eternal Life to any of our People? And what a service to the Community wherein we live, if by our publick Discourses once or twice a week, we can perswade men to break off any destructive courses of debauchery, malice, or revenge, which they may be unhappily engaged in; and to be so conscientious towards God and man, so diligent in their honest callings, so chaste, temperate, meek and humble in their conversations, as that they may be a comfort to themselves and to all that belong to them! These are the fruits of sound and serious preaching; and they will certainly encrease in proportion to our skill and diligence in the performance

The P R E F A C E. xiii

formance of this Duty. Which should animate us to cultivate and improve our Talent this way.

THE surest means that I know of, to improve our preaching, is, daily to read the holy Scripture with such proper Expositions, as that we may hardly fail once a week to compose a useful Sermon for the Lord's Day following. And that which I conceive to be most likely to hold us constant to this exercise, is, to preach in a method, either catechetical, or upon the Lessons, Epistles or Gospels, or otherwise as every man shall judge most expedient for himself, and profitable for his hearers. For in this method his subjects will lye in a straight line before him, and save him a good deal of time and pains, which we often spend in considering what to preach upon, and too commonly pass the whole week without fixing upon any thing. By the method which I have taken, I have found my pains much facilitated in the course of Sermons which I here publish.

BESIDES the benefit which a constant method of good preaching will bring to the People, it will be no less advantageous to our selves. For it will make us well acquainted with the Word of God, and with the Works of other grave and serious Writers; and enable us upon any emergent occasion to explain the difficult passages of the sacred Text, and to rescue it from the Cavils of ignorant, or ill-designing men. It will furnish us with a treasure of divine Wisdom, out of which we may readily draw cordials for the afflicted, resolutions for
the

the doubtful, encouragements for the feeble-minded, and suitable reproofs for the various sorts of offenders, according as the nature of their sins shall require. Hereby we shall maintain the dignity of our profession, and approve our selves as sufficient Ministers of Religion, thoroughly instructed for all the occasions and good purposes of it. Our thoughts and inclinations will be so turned to divine things, that our whole conversation will savour of them, and we shall not want to amuse our selves with other studies, nor catch at every invitation which calls us out to the business or entertainments of the World, having much better food for our Souls, much nobler subjects for the employment of our time and the exercise of our meditations.

- If any of my poor Brethren shall plead his inability to purchase books for this study, I crave leave to say, that a few books, well chosen and carefully perused, will serve his turn for a good while. And when by his well-studied and weighty Discourses he shall have made full proof of his diligence, let him not doubt but the Providence of God will raise him up such friends as by gift or loan will supply him with whatever of this kind he may have farther occasion for. Nay, if his own natural parts or acquisitions should be but mean, and even contemptible at his first setting out, yet by the Blessing of God upon his unwearied endeavours, he may improve to a degree of admiration and excellence; as many unpromising Students have done, not only in this, but likewise
in

The P R E F A C E. xv

in the study of all other ingenious Arts and Sciences. Let but a man have a hearty good will to the business of his Calling, and *he that teacheth man knowledge, never fails to accomplish him in it.*

If we can but make it our meat and drink to do our Master's work, he will graciously carry us through all obstructions which may lye in the way of it. Do we want the Necessaries of this life? The ready way to obtain them is, not so much to court the Patronage of men, as to seek the Glory of God in the first place. Would we fain see our neglected Churches repaired, adorned and beautified? Let us take care to bring clean hands and pure hearts to offer in them the Sacrifices of Prayers and Praises to God. Let us prepare our words to speak so worthily of him in the Congregations of the People, that they may be duly affected with a sense of his Presence, and willingly kneel before him, and worship him with an holy Worship; and then they will be easily inclined to regard the decency and good order of his House, and to bear the charges of its necessary repairs and ornaments.

SURELY to glorifie God is the most honourable, most advantageous service, which man is able to perform. And who so capable of glorifying him, as we who minister to him and his People in all the sacred Offices of his Church? In going before our Congregations, and animating them by our own voice and gesture to shew forth the Praises of the divine Majesty, to recognize him in our Creeds and Confessions

Confessions of Faith, and to reverence and adore him in all the various parts of religious Worship. In the reading and preaching of his Word we are his Ambassadors (let the enemies of Souls explode our character, with as much rancour as they can) we have our great Master's credentials to shew for it, that we are Ambassadors from him to our People, to acquaint them with the Will and Pleasure, and to reconcile them to the Favour of God. How should this character excite us to be zealous and unwearied in the work of our Mission? To make our Assemblies for publick Worship, first as devout, and then as full and frequent as ever we can? well knowing that God is most properly glorified in his Church, and his name most highly exalted in the Congregations of his People.

Now if we believe that gracious Promise, that those who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of Heaven; if we remember that saying of our Lord, that he will most highly applaud before God, Angels, and Men, those who have done him most honour upon Earth; what dignities are so excellent, what revenues so great, as those which are to be found in the service of this all-sufficient, all-gracious Master! Can we think it a hardship, that he claims our whole service for such rewards, that he enjoyns us to call none upon earth Master in comparison of him?

Go now, and spend that time at the Levées and Tables of great Men, in waiting upon their pleasures and courting them for a Benefice,

which

which you ought to imploy in attending upon God, and composing with his Assistance such a Discourse as you may pronounce to his Glory and the Improvement of your People in some one or more of the graces of his Holy Spirit. Neglect if you can those most laudable Studies and Spiritual Exercises, which will by degrees fill your own Minds with the light of true Wisdom, and the most solid and lasting Satisfaction; which will raise you far above Contempt, and render you venerable in the eyes of all that know you; which will convert many of your Enemies to Friends, and fortifie you against the rest, that they cannot hurt you: Neglect them, I say, if you can, for those temporal Benefits, which you will neither possess with true honour, nor review at your End with any comfort, when you shall see your own Souls, and the Flocks committed to your charge, destitute, poor, and naked of Spiritual Graces, by reason of such Neglects.

Y o u know, the End which the best Philosophers proposed in their Studies, was, to find out a Happiness which was not dependent on the will or humour of the World about them. This Happiness is brought to light by the Gospel of Christ, and obvious to all the Professors, but most eminently to the Ministers of it. What! cannot we be happy, without asking leave of the World? We that are his Ministers who hath all power in Heaven and Earth? who hath promised us manifold Advantages of his Service even in this present Life? who hath set us up as Lights of the world, that others

xviii *The* P R E F A C E.

seeing our Faith in him, may walk in the same steps of a pious dependance; shall not we proclaim the Happiness of our Lot, and the veracity of our Master, by serving him without fear of any Evil that can befall us in the way of our Duty? Let our regards from Men be as cold, and our circumstances as straight as they some time were to him who said, *I am so fast in prison, that I cannot get forth*; we will bravely say with another in such circumstances, *Restat iter caelo*, 'Let them engross Earth and Sea to themselves, so long as they leave the Heavens open to us, we will make our selves wings, and ascend thither, and surmount all the Hardships to which they would confine us.'

NOTHING can confine us to Hardships, but a want of that Zeal in our Ministry which I have been recommending. Let us not be cold in our love of God, and then he will quickly warm the hearts of Men towards us. A faithful observance of the Vows which we made when we entred into his Service, will produce wonderful Effects. Let us but once unanimously act up to them, and our Success will be glorious.



THE
TEXTS
Of the THIRD VOLUME.

SERMON I. On the CIRCUMCISION.

Dent. x. 16. *Circumcise therefore the Foreskin of your Heart, and be no more stiff-necked.* Page 1

SERMON II. On the First Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Isaiah xlii. 1, 2. *Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their Idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattel: your carriages were heavy loaden, they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into Captivity.* p. 14

SERMON III. On the Second Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Isaiah liii. 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* p. 27

SERMON IV. On the Third Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Isaiah lvi. 10, 11. *His Watchmen are blind; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.* p. 40

SERMON V. On the Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Isaiah lviii. 3. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold in the day of your Fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.* p. 53
a 2
SER.

The TEXTS.

SERMON VI. On the Fifth Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Isaiah lxiv. 1. *O that thou wouldest rent the Heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.* p. 66

SERMON VII. On the Sixth Sunday after EPIPHANY.

Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2. *Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word.* p. 79

SERMON VIII. On SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday.

Gen. ii. 15, 16, 17. *And the Lord took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* p. 91

SERMON IX. On SEXAGESIMA Sunday.

Gen. vi. 1, 2, 3. *And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them: That the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.* p. 103

SERMON X. On QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday.

Gen. xii. 1, 2, 3. *Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I shall shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* p. 116

SER.

The TEXTS.

S E R M O N XI. On the First Sunday in LENT.

Gen. xxii. 11, 12. *And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of Heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the Lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.* p. 129

S E R M O N XII. On the Second Sunday in LENT.

Gen. xxxiv. 30, 31. *And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?* p. 141

S E R M O N XIII. On the Third Sunday in LENT.

Gen. xlii. 21, 22. *And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also, his blood is required.* p. 155

S E R M O N XIV. On the Fourth Sunday in LENT.

Gen. xlv. 5. *Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with your selves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve life.* p. 168

S E R M O N XV. On the Fifth Sunday in LENT.

Exod. v. 1, 2. *And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a Feast unto me in the Wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.* p. 181

S E R M O N XVI. On the Sixth Sunday in LENT.

Exod. x. 1, 2. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: and that thou mayst tell in the ears of thy son and of thy*

The T E X T S.

thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them, that ye may know how that I am the Lord.

P. 195

S E R M O N XVII. On EASTER Sunday.

Exod. xiv. 30, 31. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians: and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses.

p. 208

S E R M O N XVIII. On the First Sunday after EASTER.

Numb. xii. 18. And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

p. 221

S E R M O N XIX. On the Second Sunday after EASTER.

Numb. xiv. 10, 11, 12, 13. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phineas the Son of Eleazar, the Son of Aaron the Priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, (while he was zealous for my sake among them) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

p. 235

S E R M O N XX. On the Third Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. v. 2. The Lord our God made a Covenant with us in Horeb.

P. 249

S E R M O N XXI. On the Fourth Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. vii. 12. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments and keep and do them; that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the Covenant and the Mercy which he swore unto thy fathers.

p. 263

S E R M O N XXII. On the Fifth Sunday after EASTER.

Deut. ix. 6. Understand therefore that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.

p. 277

S E R-

The T E X T S.

SERMON XXIII. On the Sunday after Ascension- DAY.

Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3. *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder: And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

P. 291

SERMON XXIV. On WHITSUNDAY.

Isaiah xi. 1, 2. *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

P. 305

SERMON XXV. On TRINITY Sunday.

Gen. xviii. 1, 2. *And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day. And he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground.*

P. 312

SERMON XXVI. On the First Sunday after TRINITY.

Joshua xxiii. 2. *Take good heed therefore unto your selves, that ye love the Lord your God.*

P. 336

SERMON XXVII. On the Second Sunday after TRINITY.

Judges v. 1, 2. *Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.*

P. 350

SERMON XXVIII. On the Third Sunday after TRINITY.

1 Sam. iii. 12, 13. *In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken against his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will*

The T E X T S.

I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

P. 365

SERMON XXIX. On the Fourth Sunday after TRINITY.

1 Sam. xiii. 13, 14. *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.*

P. 380

SERMON XXX. On the Fifth Sunday after TRINITY.

1 Sam. xvii. 50. *So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him.*

P. 395

SERMON XXXI. On the Sixth Sunday after TRINITY.

2 Sam. xix. 1. *And it was told Joab, Behold, the King weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.*

P. 410

All preached at St. Alphage and St. Michael's
Crooked-Lane, LONDON.



SERMON



S E R M O N I.

On the CIRCUMCISION.



DEUTERONOMY X. 10.

Circumcise therefore the Foreskin of your Heart, and be no more stiff-necked.

MOSES, according to his Method in this Book, has been laying before the Children of *Israel* several of the most remarkable Passages of their Travels thro' the Wilderness. But that which he most enlarges upon, is the grievous Enormity which they committed at *Horeb*, in making the Golden Calf for their Idol: Which was such an act of Rebellion both against *Moses* and against God, as is not to be parallel'd. *Make us Gods*, said they to *Aaron*, *which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of Egypt, we know not what is become of him.* What strange language was this? to call for an Idol: when the sound of that Commandment was scarce out of their Ears, which had been just then proclaimed from Heaven, commanding them to make any Similitude of the Deity: and to say, they

knew not what was become of *Moses*, when he was gone up into the Mountain at their earnest Request! for they had besought him, saying, *Go near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and report it to us, and we will hear it, and do it.* But how quickly did they break this Promise? which provoked *Moses* to break the two Tables of the Law before their Eyes, intimating thereby, that they were utterly unworthy to be taken into Covenant with God.

BUT he did not stop here. For he threw the molten Image into the fire, reduced it to powder, mixt it with water, and made the people drink of it. Next, he caused Execution to be done upon the principal Offenders, by putting about three thousand of them to the sword. And having done this, he went up again into the Mount, to make an Atonement for this grievous Sin of the People; he fell down before the Lord, and interceded with strong crying and tears, that he would not consume this stubborn rebellious Generation, as they had deserved: he kept a second Fast of forty Days, and prevailed with God to renew his Law, and write it upon other two Tables of Stone, as at the first. These he brought down, and placed in an Ark or Chest of wood, which he had made for that purpose, that they might be preserved with the greater Safety and Reverence. *And now, says he, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear him, to walk in all his ways, to love him and to serve him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul. Circumcise therefore the Foreskin of your Heart, and be no more stiff-necked.*

YOU easily see, that the words of my Text are figurative, and import as much as if he had said, 'Mortify all your sinful Lusts and Passions; correct that blindness of Mind and hardness of Heart,

Heart, which you have been so notoriously guilty of, and be no longer stubborn and rebellious against your God.' And because outward Circumcision was a Sign of this inward and spiritual Grace, which consisted in casting off the old Man, the former Conversation, with all the corrupt and perverse Manners thereof, therefore *Moses* useth this phrase of circumcising the Heart. And since he requires this of a People among whom many were uncircumcised (for that part of their Law was dispensed with in the Wilderness, as being impracticable in a state of daily Travel and Warfare) hence he taught them, that God chiefly regards this inward and spiritual Circumcision, and did not esteem the outward in comparison of it, according to that of *St. Paul*, *Rom. ii. 29. He is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose praise is not of Men, but of God.*

THESE Jews to whom *Moses* speaks, were noted for a singular, and as I may say, an impentrate hardness of Heart. God often upbraids them with it, throughout the Law and the Prophets, calling them faithless and perverse, a disobedient and stiff-necked Generation. Men whose Eyes, and Ears, and Hearts were given them to no good effect, for that they were as stupid as Brutes and Stocks, they could neither see, nor hear, nor understand. This was the reason of their long wandering in the Wilderness, that they might learn to fear God and keep his Commandments; in which they proved such slow Proficients, that God swore in his wrath that only two of that Generation which came out of *Egypt*, should enter into the promised Land.

BUT many of this Generation were still living, when *Moses* made the Discourse here before us; as we may learn from the next Chapter, where he

says expressly, *I speak not to your Children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord their God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his Miracles and Acts which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh and unto all his Land, and what he did unto the Egyptian Army, how he made the water of the Red-sea to overflow them, as they pursued after you; and what he did unto you in the Wilderness, until ye came unto this Place: what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, &c.* But I speak to you whose Eyes have seen all the great Acts of the Lord which he did.

HERE we may observe two Things. 1st, That these Words in all probability were spoken several Years before the People passed over Jordan. For this Generation which came out of Egypt, (of which many were now living) were all dead before their Posterity went over Jordan, except only two of them, as was noted before. 2^{dly}, This was a great Aggravation of their Sins, that having seen with their own Eyes the undeniable Miracles which God had wrought for them, they were after all guilty of gross Infidelity and Disobedience. Sins inexcusable in us, or in any People who shall only read or hear of these wonderful Works of God: But most monstrous in those who had been Eye-witnesses of them. For they had not only the strongest Ideas of them imprest upon their own Minds, but were likewise to be the Teachers and Witnesses of them to future Generations. A work which they could perform but with an ill grace. For how could they seriously recommend that Obedience to their Children which they did not practise themselves? How could they hope to beget a suitable Reverence in them towards those divine Revelations which they had so lightly esteemed? No other Satisfaction could possibly be made for their former Dishonours and Contempts of God, but that
which

which is here injoynd them in my Text, to circumcise their Hearts, to make an ingenuous and humble confession of their Ingratitude and Rebelions, to express a sensible remorse and compunction of Mind, as often as they had occasion to mention them to their Children.

It is observable, that their great Historian *Josephus*, tho' he gives a very particular account of the delivery of the Law at Mount *Sinai*, *Antiq. B. iii. c. 4.* yet takes no notice of the early Breach of it, by making the Golden Calf. He tells us, that 'When the People with great Joy had heard God himself speak to them, *Moses* dismiss them, and they departed to their Tents. That in a few days after, they presented themselves before his Pavilion, beseeching him to obtain of God such Laws as might serve for the Government of their Commonwealth, and bring them with him; which he promised to do. That soon after he ascended again into the Mount in their sight; and when he had tarried there forty days, the People were in great pain for him, lest some evil had happen'd to him: And several spoke variously about it. They that were not well affected to him, said he was devour'd of wild Beasts: others, that he was taken up to God. But the wiser sort suspended their Opinion of his Fate, and rather bewailed their own, in that they were deprived of such a Governor and Guide, whose equal they thought it impossible for them ever to find. Their Apprehension that they had lost him, made their Expectation of him very uneasy, and yet they durst not remove their Tents, he having charged them to continue there till he came again. At length, after forty days he return'd, to the great Joy of the whole Camp, whom he certified of God's exceeding Love and Goodness towards them, and that, during his

S E R M O N I.

Absence from them, he had seen the means how
 they might become a happy People; and how
 God required them to build him a Tabernacle,
 into which he would descend and accompany
 them in their Travels, so that they should have
 no occasion hereafter to go up into Mount Sinai
 to pray to him and learn his Will. Then he
 shew'd them the two Tables containing the Ten
 Commandments, written with God's own hand;
 at which the People rejoiced, and readily brought
 in their Contributions of Money and Materials
 for building the Tabernacle, which *Josephus*
 proceeds to speak of very largely; but says not
 one word of the Golden Calf; as probably being
 loth that so foul a blemish in the Religion of his
 Ancestors should be exposed to the Eyes of the
Romans, for whose Information chiefly he wrote
 his History. He says indeed, that he intended to
 write a particular Book upon the subject of their
 Laws, which leaves us room to suppose, that he
 reserved the Account of this Fact to be inserted
 in that Book. But no such Work is come to our
 hands, and 'tis likely he never perform'd it; so
 that we must say, he is wholly silent in this matter.

He was certainly ashamed to discover this Ido-
 latry of his Nation to the *Gentiles*, which, all Cir-
 cumstances consider'd, was the most shameful that
 ever was heard of. But as for his own part, he
 could not be ignorant of it, and no doubt he had
 fasted for it, and must remember, in this Captivity
 and Destruction of his People by the *Romans*, how
 God had threatned, that in all his publick Viska-
 tions of the *Jews* for their Sins, he would visit for
 this Sin also. There was but one way to prevail
 with God to blot it out of the Book of his Re-
 membrance, and that was, for the Offenders to
 follow the Prescription of my Text, to circumcise
 their hard Hearts, and mollify their stiff Necks.

Which

Which they failed to do. On the contrary, they multiplied their Rebellions, till they were all cut off in the Wilderness, and not one of them enter'd into the Land of Canaan. And how much their Posterity resembled them in a stubborn, wilful Disposition of Mind, appears from all the Prophets, particularly from Ezek. xx. 18, where we have these Words of God; *I said unto their Children in the Wilderness, Walk ye not in the Statutes of your Fathers, neither observe their Judgments, nor defile your selves with their Idols. I am the Lord your God: walk in my Statutes, and keep my Judgments, and do them. Notwithstanding the Children rebelled against me: they walked not in my Statutes, neither kept my Judgments to do them: but their Heart went after their Fathers Idols. And Jer. xxxv. 15. he says a thing which often occurs in that Prophet; 'tis this: I have sent unto you all my Servants the Prophets, rising up early, and sending them, saying, Return ye now, every Man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other Gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the Land which I have given to you and to your Fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkned unto me. Therefore behold, I will bring upon Judah, and upon all the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard, and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.*

HENCE we may form a more perfect Idea of that uncircumcised Heart and stiff Neck spoken of in my Text. For on one side we may conceive God standing and calling this People to the Obedience of his Law, and to all the happy Consequences of it, by his Word, by his Prophets and Ministers, by the Dispensations of his Mercy, and by his fatherly Chastisements and Corrections. On the other side we see a People, who after all God's

SERMON I.

leaves them to govern them, walk in their own Will, and do their own Will, just as if nothing had been said to them, nor done for them; as if they had no Obligation of Nature or Covenant, of Dependence, Benefit, or Gratitude, to fear, love, and serve God; but were wholly at their own disposal; and were absolute Masters of all their faculties of Mind, Body, and Estate, to employ them as it seemed good in their own eyes.

As our sacred Books are full of Animadversions upon this proud and headstrong Spirit, so we see a great deal of it in all the Assemblies of Mankind. We can hardly find a Man who is addicted to any Vice (and where may we not find such a one?) but he is an Instance of the Hardness I am speaking of, and how little the ordinary means of Grace avail to work Conversion in us. For he can hear Scriptures and Sermons, the Blessings and Curses, the Promises and Threatnings of God, and all the Histories of his Judgments upon such Sinners as himself, and behave as a Man unconcerned in all this, and still retain his Vice, which he rarely parts with out of any Reverence to God or Religion, but only in consideration of his Health, Age, Reputation, or secular Interest.

So likewise for Exhortations to any good work of Piety or Charity, how hardly are Men persuaded by them to set about it? Whether it be to promote the Education of Children, the Relief of poor Sufferers under any Misfortune, the frequenting of the Holy Sacrament, or the like, it is wonderful to observe what small Additions are made to such good Works, by the best Arguments that can be drawn from Scripture and Reason, affectionately inculcated by the Speaker, and listen'd to with attention by the Hearers. In which case the Character and Temper of our People is much the same with theirs in *Ezekiel's* time,

On the CIRCUMCISION. 69

of whom God speaks thus, *Ezek. xxxiii. 32. Son of Man, the Children of thy People come unto thee, and sit before thee, as my People: and they hear my Words, but they will not do them: for with their Mouths they shew much Love, but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness. And loe, thou art unto them as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant Voice, and can play well upon an Instrument; for they hear thy Words, but do them not.* They commended the Prophet's Sermon as a well-penn'd Discourse, deliver'd with an agreeable Voice and a becoming Gesture, just as if it had been some Play or Opera. And when they had said this, they had done with it, they thought no more of it.

But now, what can be more provoking to God or Man, than such an odd-humour'd, untractable Genius as this, which is always defeating the end of the best Laws, and perverting the meaning of the plainest Instructions? like a stiff-necked, hard-mouthed Brute, which continually starts aside, and never keeps the right way. St. Paul's Argument for our ready Obedience and Submission to God in all his dealings with us, is full of most excellent reason. *Heb. xii. 9. We have had, says he, Fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own Pleasure, but he for our Profit, that we might be Partakers of his Holiness.* The Scope of which Argument is this. Earthly Parents often command their Children to do things of a middle nature, wherein Piety and Virtue are not concern'd: But our heavenly Father never requires any thing of us, but that which serves to accomplish in us some moral Virtue, or Grace of his Holy Spirit.

EARTHELY

EARTHLY Parents expect to be obey'd of their Children in those Commands which are merely for their own Pleasure or Humour; and if the Children sullenly neglect them, or saucily object against them, their Parents may correct them, and in case of Obstinacy disinherit them and turn them out of doors, and in so doing they will be justified by all but those who have the Spirit of such rebellious Children. How much more just is it in God to punish impenitent Sinners with temporal and eternal Judgments, for transgressing his righteous and holy Laws, in keeping of which there is great Reward, even the Reward of everlasting Salvation?

LET any Man consider it, and answer it to himself: Whether a Spirit of Disobedience is not most pernicious to Mankind in Church, in State, and in private Families. Upon this Spirit the divine Word, which in its own nature is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, can make no manner of Impression, but meets with the Resistance of a Rock of Adamant. By the prevalence of it the best Laws of political Government become as weak and ineffectual, as if they were but so many Spiders Webs. And the reason why Parents have no more comfort of their Children, nor Masters of their Servants, is, because they are commonly stupid and inconsiderate, daring and presumptuous, rude and untractable in the way which they should go. The Spirit of Disobedience under some of these Characters domineers in every corner and cottage inhabited by the Children of Men. And it is the source of innumerable Woes and Calamities, as well to those who are possess'd with it, as to others who are molested and abused by it. So that we shall never see good days in this World, till this stubborn Spirit

is

is sorely mortified, and subdued under the yoke of Discipline.

CIRCUMCISE therefore the Foreskin of your Heart, and be no more stiff-necked. Resolve to cast out this wicked Spirit, this Rebel against God and Man, tho' the Heart suffer a wound and be made to ache in the operation. The short pain, tho' never so acute, will be abundantly recompensed by the peaceable Fruits of a meek and tractable Spirit which will succeed in the room of it. Good is that word of the Lord which admonishes Men *not to be like the Horse and Mule which have no understanding, whose mouths must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they run away with the Rider:* But no less rational and necessary for Government is that other Text, which assigns a *Whip for the Horse, and a Bridle for the Ass, and a Rod for the Fool's back.* To hear the words of Instruction, and be excited to Duty by good Admonitions, is most suitable to the Dignity of human Nature: But whosoever is so brutish as not to be govern'd by the Voice of Wisdom and right Reason, let him smart under such Severities as are fit to put off the Brute and restore the Man.

The prodigal Son in the Gospel was not capable of hearing any thing which crossed his own Inclinations, so long as he lived in the ease and plenty of his Father's house. But when he had left it, and by living at his own Discretion had reduced himself to a state of Hunger and Cold and Nakedness, this change of Fortune changed his Mind and Notion of things; it effectually humbled his proud Heart and stiff Neck, so as to make him glad to offer himself as a Servant in that Family, where before he had lived in the condition of a Son.

SOMETHING like this we meet with in our daily Experience of things. A Man who looks upon

upon the Commands of God and his Superiors to be unreasonable Restraints of his Liberty, never fails to indulge his own perverse Will, which is the worst of Slavery, which loads him with Troubles and Crosses every day, and finally plunges him into the depth of Mischief; out of which if he escapes at last with the Redemption of his Soul, it will be very well. But he shall not escape so, except his proud and stubborn Heart be thoroughly humbled, and his stiff Neck become tractable and patient under the yoke of God's Law. For otherwise he is of the number of those proud and haughty Scorners whom God professes to resist, and to whom he will shew himself a mighty and terrible God, as it follows after my Text.

LET us then beseech God to take from us all Hardness of Heart, and Contempt of his Word and Commandment, and give us Grace to hearken to his Laws, that he may vouchsafe to hear our Prayers. For that is the Condition of our Acceptance with him: but if we will not draw nigh to him when he invites us, we shall not find him our present Help when we cry unto him in our Troubles. And this is the reason why we reap no more Benefit from our Religion after many years Exercise of it, because we are perverse and partial in it; we keep some of the Laws of it, and transgress others, according to our own corrupt Inclinations. In cases where God's ways differ from ours, *our Neck*, to speak in Scripture phrase, *is like an iron Sineew, and our Heart like a piece of the nether Millstone*. In such cases, tho' the Will of God and our Duty be never so plain, never so powerfully inculcated, yet we have not Eyes to see, nor Ears to hear, nor a Heart to understand it.

To such perverse Children God cannot shew the loving-kindness of a Father. I say, he cannot shew

On the CIRCUMCISION. 11

shew it; for it is contrary to his Nature, to his Covenant, and to the eternal Laws of Truth and Reason. He hath declared, that he will render to every Man according to his Works, viz. Crosses to the froward, disobedient Children to those who have been disobedient, delusive Joys to the sensual Voluptuary, Judgment without Mercy to those who have shewed no Mercy, and the like.

LET this prevail with us to repent, and be thoroughly converted: to turn our obstinate Adherence to our own ways into Stedfastness in the ways of God, and our Love of our selves and our own Wills into a Zeal for his Glory: to put off that Pride which provokes him to resist us, and be clothed with that Humility which he will allow to cover a Multitude of past Offences and Transgressions, thro' the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, &c.



SERMON



S E R M O N II.

On the First Sunday after EPIPHANY.



ISAIAH xlii. 1, 2.

Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their Idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattel: your carriages were heavy loaden, they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together, they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into Captivity.



T being decreed by the Almighty, and revealed by his Prophets, that the Citizens of *Jerusalem* and People of *Judah* should be carried Captives to *Babylon*, the Prophets abound in their Admonitions to them, to take heed and keep themselves pure from the *Babylonian* Idolatries: promising them, that if they adhered faithfully to the God of their Fathers, he would visit them with his Salvation, and after seventy years Exile would find out a way for their Deliverance and Return to their own Country again, as it afterwards happened.

Now

First Sunday after EPIPHANY. 15

NOW such Warnings were very necessary for this People, both because of their Abominations of this kind which they had committed in their own Land, and defiled it till it cast them out, and likewise because they were to live in the Dominions and Society of their Conquerors, whose Religion consisted wholly in the Worship of Idols, and who would be apt upon all occasions to upbraid the vanquished *Jews* with the Weakness of their own God, as if he had not been able to save them from this Captivity. For such was the opinion of the *Gentiles*, that when their Arms prevailed against their Enemies, they thought their Gods at the same time prevailed against the Gods of the adverse Party. Thus we hear *Rabsakeb* and his Master *Sennacherib* asking *Hezekiah* and his People, *Who are they among all the Gods of these lands, Hamath, Arphad, Sepharvaim, Samaria, that have deliver'd their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?* Thus afterwards the King of *Babylon* menaces his *Jewish* Captives, that if they would not worship his golden Image, he would cast them into a fiery Furnace, and who, says he, is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? To the same purpose no doubt would the Citizens of *Babylon* argue with the conquer'd Nations, that seeing no means, divine or human, had been able to stop the course of *Nebuchadnezzar's* Arms, it were best for them to abandon the Service of their vanquished Deities, and worship the more powerful and propitious Gods of the *Chaldeans*.

SUCH Arguments would sound plausibly in the mouths of those who had triumphed over all their Neighbours, and might have their weight with those who were fallen into Slavery amongst Aliens, after they had pray'd, and fought, and suffer'd e-

very

16 SERMON II. On the 1.

very thing for the Defence of their Religion and Country.

AND therefore God, to prevent the ill effects which these Reasonings might have upon his People, instructs them by his Prophets how to think and judge of the Deity. Will ye, says he, compare me with *Bel* or *Nebo*, the Gods of the *Babylonians*? Consider the difference between us. These Idols are set up and taken down by their Worshippers at pleasure. And when they remove to any distance, they lay them upon their Camels or other Carriages, with the rest of their Furniture: for they have no help in themselves, nor can stir any farther than they are carried. But I, who have forbidden you to make any graven Image of me, have convinced you by the Effects of my Power, that I am your Maker, having derived you from a Stock that was naturally incapable of bearing you; from which Production I have encreased and multiplied you, and carried you thro' unusual Difficulties to this present time; foretelling you things to come, and promising you manifold Blessings, which I have constantly fulfilled. And your selves are Witnesses that you have always been most prosperous when you have diligently observ'd my Commands, and kept your Religion clear from the Pollution of dumb Idols.

AND whereas these Idols may dazzle your Eyes with their lustre, consider that they owe their Glory to the hands of Men: but 'tis I who created the Carpenter, the Smith, the Engraver, and Gilder who form'd them; I am the Maker of the Silver, and Gold, and precious Stones which adorn them.

THIS is briefly the Substance of what God says by *Isaiah* concerning the infinite Distance between himself and Idols. Many more are the In-

vectives

vestives which we find in Scripture against them: as that they have Eyes and see not, Ears and hear not, Mouths and speak not, Feet and walk not. But the largest and most exact Description of the Vanity of Idols, is that in the Book of *Baruch*, which tho' it be part of the Apocryphal Scriptures, yet the reasoning is just, and therefore worthy our perusal. It is the sixth Chapter of that Book, and bears the Title of an Epistle sent by *Jeremiah* the Prophet to those that should be led Captives to *Babylon*; telling them that when they came thither, they should see Gods of Silver and Gold and Wood, born upon Mens shoulders, and crouds of People kneeling round about them, and worshipping them. But beware, says he, that ye join not with these Idolaters; for their Idols cannot save their golden Crowns, and the Purple which they wear, from Moths and Dust, which often settles upon them. Neither does the scepter, or dagger, or ax, which is put in their hands, secure them from the rapine of Thieves and plundering Soldiers, who would daily carry them off; did not the Priests lock up the gates of the Temple to secure them. They light up candles before them, of which they cannot see one; their faces are blackt with the smoke, and they cannot wipe it off. Swallows and Batts perch upon them, and they cannot fray them away. — with a great deal more to this purpose; whence he concludes, that they ought not to be the objects of any Man's religious Fear, but rather of his Contempt and Aversion.

The answer which the *Gentiles* commonly gave to these Arguments was this: That they did not adore the Metal of their Images as a divine Substance, but only the Spirits that resided in them. For they thought that when an Image was dedicated by solemn Rites to any of their Deities, sup-

VOL. III. C pose

pose to *Bel*, or to *Nebo*, with Supplications to him, to come and take possession of it; that thereupon he was pleased to inhabit it. But whatever refined notions they might urge in their disputations, yet their common sentiments and practice were gross; for not only their People, but even their King thought that this very *Bel* mention'd in my Text eat every day twelve great measures of fine flower, and forty sheep; and drank six vessels of wine: And tho' in the end this was discovered to be a fraud of the Priests, who lived with their families on this provision; yet so long as the King believed it, he urged this great eating as an argument that *Bel* was a great God. And this proves him to have conceived sensual and earthly notions of his Deity.

BUT let us grant what they ask, that they carried their Devotions beyond the Images, to the Spirits whom they courted to dwell in them. What were these Spirits, generally speaking, but the Souls of Men which once lived upon earth? and being born in the Countries where they were worshipped, were exalted by the People to be their tutelar Deities and Patrons. So *Belus*, a famous King, and *Nebo* a great Prophet of the *Babylonians* in their former state, came in time to be idolized by them. They might possibly be very considerable and useful men in their Generation, innocent of the impieties of those who idolized them, and as sensible as any of us of their infinite Inferiority to the Majesty of God. However, when their Images were erected and deified, it was necessary for the Prophets of God to declaim against them, which they might do with as little injury or contempt to the deceased, as we can speak against the Idols of the blessed Angels and Saints, while for themselves we preserve all due love, esteem, and veneration.

First Sunday after EPIPHANY. 19

AND thus we have seen the Doctrine of the Prophets concerning the vanity and impotence of Idols. But *Isaiah* goes farther, and reduces this Doctrine into Practice. For in his spiritual Vision he saw *Bel* and *Nebo* thrown down from their high Places, and carried into captivity. He saw this above one hundred and sixty years before it came to pass, and at a time when there was not the least probability of it. For *Babylon* was at this time in a strong and flourishing state, and shortly after became possess of the Empire of the East. This is what *Isaiah* makes her say in the next chapter. O virgin daughter of *Babylon*, i. e. Thou City that wast never yet conquer'd; thou hast said, I shall be a Lady for ever; I am, and there is none else beside me. I shall not sit as a widow, nor know the loss of children. But these two things shall befall thee in one day, widowhood and the loss of children; i. e. thou shalt lose both King and People. Therefore come down from thy throne, sit in the dust as a mourner; Take the millstones and grind meal, as a slave; for in the eastern Countries, where they have not Corn-mills like ours, this work is laid upon the meanest drudges: Make bare thy leg, uncover thy thigh, as women led captive were obliged to do, when they passed over rivers. Your carriages too are heavy laden with your Idols, which are thrown in among the rest of the spoil, and are so far from delivering it out of the Enemies hand, that they are gone themselves into Captivity.

By these Expressions it appears that *Isaiah* had a clear foresight of the ruin of the *Babylonians*. He saw the Enemy break into their city, plunder their houses and temples, and drive away the Inhabitants like so many herds of cattle before them. This their Calamity he saw at a very great distance, when their Felicity was in perfection, and their

20 S E R M O N II. On the

Gods and Prophets gave them no warning of any evil that was approaching.

This is the challenge which God makes to them, *ch. xlviii. 13. Let now the Astrologers, the Star-gazers, the monthly Prognosticators stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them: they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame.*

BUT to himself he claims the prerogative of knowing things to come, and urges this as a proof of his divine Nature. *I declare the end from the beginning, and from antient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. Calling a ravenous bird from the east; This was Cyrus King of Persia, which lay eastward of Babylon; styled here a ravenous bird, not that he was tyrannical, for he was a very just and gracious Prince; but being a great Warrior, he chose to bear an Eagle in his Standard, as a good omen of Victory; that bird being King of all the fowls of the air, as Xenophon informs us in the seventh book of his Life.*

THIS Embleme was sufficient to denote the *Persian* King, as our modern Kings and Princes may be all known by the Figures which they bear in their Banners; and our Saviour in the Gospel is well known to mean the *Romans*, when he calls them the Eagles for the like reason. But to put the divine Prescience out of all question, the Almighty in several places of his Word has called *Cyrus* by name, declaring that he had named him before he had any being, to strike the *Babylonian* yoke off his People's neck, to rebuild that *Jerusalem* which they had demolished, and new-found that Temple which they had burnt.

BUT why, may some ask, did God thus punish the *Babylonians* for their Severities to his People?

For

First Sunday after EPIPHANY. 21

For what were they more than the Executioners of his wrath upon them? I answer, there were three reasons for which God visited the *Babylonians* with the Arms of the *Persians*, viz. Cruelty, Pride, and Impiety.

AND, I. They abused the Victory which God gave them over *Judah*, with the commission of many inhuman Outrages upon all sorts of persons and things without distinction. They made spoil and havock of the most sacred things; they slaughtered Women and Priests, old Men and Children in the most barbarous manner; whereas by the Law of Arms these should have been spared, except God had expressly commanded them to be destroyed, as he did the *Amalekites*. But that he gave no such Commission in this case, appears by his own complaints of the *Chaldeans* cruelty. *When I was wroth with my people*, says he, ch. xlvii. 6. *and gave them into thy hand, thou didst shew them no mercy: upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid the yoke.* Again *Zech. i. 15.* *I was but a little displeased with my people, and they helped forward with their affliction.* And it was a subject of *Jeremiah's* Lamentation, that the Priest and the Prophet were slain in the Sanctuary of the Lord: that the Women were ravished in *Sion*, and the Maids in the Cities of *Judah*: That Princes were hanged up by their hand, and the faces of Elders were not honoured, &c.

II. A farther provocation of God's Anger against the *Babylonians*, was their proud boasting and arrogance, which exceeded even to Blasphemy. *Isaiah* introduces their haughty Monarch threatening to ascend above the clouds, and be like the most High. And we hear him in *Daniel* glorying over his great *Babylon*, and the house of his Kingdom, which he had built by the might of his

his Power, and for the honour of his Majesty. And when he menaces Offenders, he cries, *What God shall deliver you out of my hand?* And doubtless the People demeaned themselves as worthy Members of such a Head, thinking none living comparable to a *Babylonian*, and treating all others with insolence and contempt. Such unmeasurable swelling naturally tends to bursting, and hastens the Vengeance of God and Man. God has more than once declared himself an enemy to the proud in particular; and Men become willing Instruments in his hands to make good such threatenings.

III. THE Impiety of the *Babylonians* was a third Reason why God gave them up for a Prey to the *Persians*. Besides those Idolatries which were common to them with other *Gentiles*, they were notoriously addicted to Enchantments, Sorceries, judicial Astrology, casting of Nativities, and such like prying into future Events. With the practice of these unlawful Arts they are charged, not only by the Prophets, but other Writers. 'The *Chaldeans*, says *Tully* in his Treatise of Divination, 'pretend to have attained such Skill from their 'long observations of the Stars, that they can tell 'any man what Fortune he is born to, and what 'shall befall him through the course of his Life.' But such Practices were condemned as criminal, even by other Heathens. *Cato* forbids Men to run after Wizards and *Chaldeans*, to consult them in difficult cases: and *Horace* writing to a Friend, says, 'It is not lawful to erect *Babylonian* Schemes and 'Figures to find out what shall be the Issue of 'our Undertakings: And other Writers have exposed the Vanity and Impiety of their predictions. But that Generation which lived in the time of *Judah's* Captivity, was most inexcusable, because

cause they personally knew several of God's holy Prophets, and could not be ignorant of their denunciations of his Judgments against such Idolatry and Impieties as prevailed in *Babylon*. This is certain, that *Daniel* and his Fellows openly testified against them, to the conviction of *Nebuchadnezzar* and his Courtiers. But we must needs wonder at the Genius of that King, how strangely he acted on these occasions; In the second chapter of *Daniel* he declares, that the God of *Israel* is God of Gods, and Lord of Kings: in the third chapter he throws all those into the fire, who will not worship a golden Image. Then presently after he makes a Decree, that all People under his Dominion who should speak any thing against of the God of *Israel*, should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. Yet a little before his death we find him monstrously transformed and degraded for not acknowledging this God; and finally he left the Impieties complained of, established in his Kingdom; which brought the scourge of God upon it, in the victorious arms of the *Persians*, and carried them and their Idols into Captivity.

BUT here it may be objected by those who are no Friends to the Practices we have condemned, that the *Babylonian* Idols and Astrologers being conquered and carried into Captivity, is no proof of the Falschood of their Religion, as my Text and Discourse seem to imply, because the same Calamities happened to *Israel* and *Judah*, the Worshipers of the true God. The Fact is undeniable: and therefore I answer,

1st, THAT *Israel* and *Judah* went into Captivity, not as Worshipers of the true God, but as Idolaters and Dealers with familiar Spirits, and because they polluted themselves with the works of the Heathen.

2^{dly}, God had foretold them, that they should suffer this Punishment for such Impiety; and he banished them among the *Gentiles*, that they might tell *them* the same, and assure them that the same God had threatened to visit *them* with like Judgments, if they did not leave their evil ways and turn to him. Which in fact he afterwards executed upon them. But none of the Gods of the Heathen, however they might forebode some things, ever pretended to threaten so expressly, and to execute with such authority; for a very good reason, because it was not in their power to do it. Nay their People were destroyed, while their Gods declared themselves desirous, tho' not able, to save them.

3^{dly}, WHEN God gave up his People for their Sins into the Enemies hands, yet he still shew'd himself to be God. The *Philistines* *Dagon* fell down and was broken to pieces before his captive Ark. And their Lords being afflicted with Hemerods for their irreverent usage of it, were quickly glad to restore it, accompanied with a Peace-offering.

IN *Daniel's* account of what passed in their Captivity at *Babylon*, we find that *Nebuchadnezzar*, *Belsazzar*, and *Darius* were moved by his Interpretations of their Visions, and by the miraculous Deliverances which God vouchsafed him and his Brethren, to confess that the God of *Israel* was the true God, and to command the People to fear and tremble before him. Whereas all the Preferments and all the Punishments which these Kings had in their power, could never move *Daniel* and his Brethren to render the least homage or reverence to any of the Gods of the *Babylonians*.

WHEN therefore it is foretold in my Text, that the *Babylonian* Idols, *Bel* and *Neb*, should be pull'd down and carried into Captivity, without being

First Sunday after EPIPHANY. 25

being able to rescue themselves; and when *Isaiah* in discoursing on this subject, denotes the Man who should carry them captive by the name of *Cyrus*; This being afterwards punctually fulfilled by a *Persian* King of that name, is a sufficient demonstration, that he who threatened this was the true God, and that those Idols which were thus carried captive, were lying Vanities: which is the thing I proposed to prove in this Discourse.

SEEING then our God is thus mighty to save or to destroy, to give us up into the hands of our Enemies, or to rescue us from them; how careful should we be to engage him in our Defence, and secure his Protection over us against all our Enemies ghostly and bodily? This we may obtain, if we labour after it with a sincere and upright Heart; if we put away the Idols of our own Imaginations, our pride and vanity, our trust in an arm of flesh, in walls and bulwarks, in riches and forces; if we are willing to see our errors, and the contrariety of our wills and ways to the divine Pleasure, and correct them. For so long as we walk contrary to God, he will set his face against us, to weaken and impoverish us, and bring us to nothing. Tho' our habitations were as impregnable as the walls of *Babylon*, he can shew the Enemy a way to break in upon us in a moment, as he did upon them, and to fill us with confusion in our profound Security, while we are at ease, and think of no evil that can happen to us.

LET us then hear the Prophets of God, and see his Dispensations of old, which are written for our Admonition, to teach us, that if we are like other Nations in their Sins, we may not flatter ourselves that we shall escape their Punishments: But awake in time from our common delusions, and renounce the Idols of our own conceit, and seriously

ly apply our Hearts to the only true Policy which
 can preserve us, which is, to fear God and keep
 his Commandments, according as he has taught
 them in his Word. In so doing we shall rest un-
 der his Shadow, and be safe under his Wings.
 Peace and Truth shall be the stability of our times,
 and everlasting Life our reward after death, thro'
 the Merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.



SERMON



SERMON III.

On the Second Sunday after EPIPHANY.



ISAIAH *liii.* 1.

*Who hath believed our report? and to whom
is the arm of the Lord revealed?*

WHAT Report is this, which the Prophet is so much concerned to have believed? Why, it is a report of the character of the Messiah, whose Birth, Life and Death he foresaw in this Vision: and he saw him to be so mean, and such a Sufferer in his outward circumstances, that he was perswaded very few People of that Generation wherein he should appear, would receive him for the Messiah: whom they would expect to make his entrance among them in much secular Pomp and Glory.

BUT that this *liiid* of *Isaiah* contains a Character of the Messiah, we have the authority of *St. Philip*, *Acts viii.* where we read, that when the *Ethiopian* Eunuch was perusing these Passages, and demanded of whom they were to be understood, *Philip* assured him that they were a Prophecy

phesy of the long promised and much desired Messiah, concerning whom he must have heard what was said in *Jerusalem* at that time; and thence he took occasion to shew him that our Saviour had done and suffered all things answerable to this character: with which discourse the Eunuch was so well satisfied, that he was immediately baptized in the Name and Faith of Jesus Christ.

THERE are several other places of the New Testament, where this chapter is quoted and applied to our Lord; and tho' the *Jews* may object against such Applications as being made by Christians in favour of their own Master, yet they must allow, that their own *Chaldee* Paraphrast and ancient Writers interpreted it of the Messiah; and their modern Doctors, who explain it to another meaning, put such a forced and unnatural sense upon it, as plainly shews they have no other reason for their new gloss, but prejudice to our Religion, which is much confirm'd by the genuine sense and construction of this Chapter.

To evince the truth of what I now assert, Let us examine the Character here drawn by *Isaiah*, and compare it with what we find recorded of our Lord in the Gospels, that we may see how these Predictions were accomplished in the Person of Jesus Christ.

1st then, THE prophetick Character begins thus: *He shall grow up before the Lord as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.* Now this agrees exactly with the circumstance of our Saviour's Birth, who was born of a poor Virgin, and tho' descended from the house of *David*, yet the Family was grown so mean and obscure as to be blended with the lowest of the People. So that while Men of high station and plentiful fortune are compared to Oaks and Cedars, the best trees of the wood, our Lord's beginning was so small as resembled

Second Sunday after EPIPHANY. 29

resembled most properly the springing up of a Shrub in a barren soil, which could afford it but a very hungry starving nourishment. Christ compares his own Condition to a such Shrub, that of the Mustard-tree, which is the least among plants at the first, tho' afterwards it spreads and flourishes in a wonderful manner.

II. UPON the account of his low Birth and Parentage *he was despised and rejected of his countrymen.* This prejudiced them against him so much, that few of them regarded his preaching and wonderful Works. When he taught in the Synagogue at *Nazareth* where he dwelt, his hearers said one to another, *Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary; and his brethren and sisters, are they not all with us?* Whence then is all this? how comes he to take so much upon him? and they were offended at him. When he told them in his preaching, *John vi. 41. I am the bread which came down from heaven,* How? said they. *Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?* Again, in the next chapter, when some exclaim'd against the Government for not taking him up, but suffering him to teach openly, *Do the Rulers,* said they, *know indeed that this is the very Christ? We know this man, whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.* They don't mean that they knew not the Family and Birth-place of the Messiah; for they presently say, that Christ was to be born of the house of *David*, and in the Town of *Bethlehem*: but they had an opinion, that soon after he was born, he should be conveyed away to some unknown place, and there lye concealed, till *Elias* should come and anoint him, and introduce him to the People. Such a Conceit as this, many of the *Jews* have at this day, that the Messiah has been born some
hundreds

90 SERMON III. On the

hundreds of years; but that their Sins hinder him from being discover'd to them. They likewise were perswaded (and that very truly) that the production of the Messiah should be far superior to that of other Men, and that God should be the immediate Author of his Incarnation. This is the meaning of what they say here, *When Christ cometh, no man knows whence he is.* But as for this man, we know whence he is; i. e. We know both his Father and Mother, his whole Family and Education.

To this our Saviour presently answers, *Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am*, as our English Translation makes him to speak, and it may be interpreted to a good sense; but not so much to the purpose, I think, as if, with some judicious men, we read his answer interrogatively, *Do ye indeed know me, and whence I am?* And understand it negatively, *Ye are far from knowing this.* This sense suits best with the occasion, and with what he says afterwards, ch. viii. *Ye cannot tell whence I come, nor whither I go: ye neither know me nor my Father.* They had no apprehension that he was any more than a Carpenter's Son: thus they styled him, and accordingly despised his Person, and slighted his Words and Works, as 'tis here prophesied.

III. HE was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He affirms of himself that he bare his Cross long before he was nailed to it. He was much exercised in severe and long Fasts, solitary Watchings, and importunate Prayers utter'd with strong crying and tears. He spent his time in works of a melancholy nature, among Objects of the greatest compassion, some of them outrageously distracted with evil Spirits, others frightfully deform'd with Leprosies, and the most loathsome diseases; together with a multitude of sinful, indigent, illiterate People, who wanted the Bread both of the Body and the Soul. He sympathized in all
the

Second Sunday after EPIPHANY. 31

the Miseries of Mankind, and wept over his *Jerusalem* in contemplation of the Calamities which he saw coming upon it.

AGREEABLE to such his Disposition and Practice were all his Doctrines, by which he labours to make all his Disciples meek and lowly in Heart, humble and poor in Spirit: teaching them that it is better to abstain from sensual Pleasures, than to enjoy them; to suffer Injuries patiently, than to revenge them; to lay up Treasure in Heaven, than to be rich, great, and honourable upon Earth. In short, he is continually inculcating upon us the practice of Mortification and Self-denial; so that his Religion is most properly styled, *the Doctrine of the Cross*; and in the whole he fully answers this part of *Isaiab's* Character, that he was a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

BUT this Character was quite contrary to that which the *Jews* of our Lord's time had conceived of the Messiah in their own mind. They imagined that he would appear higher than the Kings of the Earth in his outward Equipage and Splendor: that he would rescue his People from their yoke of servitude; that he would procure for them all such advantages as in the World's estimation are great and glorious; that he would fill their Hearts with that Joy and Gladness which redounds from supreme Dominion, Riches and Honours, Peace and Safety, and an affluence of such provisions as might satisfy and charm all the Senses. For so grossly they interpreted the Blessings of Christ's Kingdom spoken of by the Prophets. *Isaiab* knew this; and therefore when he foresaw that the Messiah should be a Man of sorrows, he foretold that a Generation of Men of such expectations and affections would shew very small regard to him.

IV. *WE* bid as it were 'our faces from him: we esteemed him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted.

This

This was fulfilled in the treatment which our Saviour met with. *Many of the rulers, says St. John xii. 42. believed that Jesus was the Christ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.* For this reason it was, that *Nicodemus* came to him by night. For the same reason the Parents of him who was born blind, whose eyes Jesus had opened, durst not speak their thoughts of him freely, lest they should incur the sentence of Excommunication which the Rulers had threatened to all those who should own him for the Messiah.

HE himself was treated as a Person excommunicate, *i. e.* as if he had been smitten of God. The Jews reviled him as a Blasphemer, Impostor, Samaritan, as one possessed with an evil Spirit, and that he cast out Devils by a Confederacy with them. Many of his Disciples were so much offended at his Doctrine, when he called himself the Bread of Heaven that gave eternal Life to men, that they utterly forsook him. And tho' his twelve Apostles adhered to him thro' the course of his Ministry, yet when he was apprehended and brought to his Fryal, they slunk away from him, and seeing him crucified were even ready to renounce him, if his Resurrection and Discourses after it had not confirm'd them. So generally was he esteemed stricken and smitten of God. So far from answering that Generation's notion of a Messiah; tho' exactly the same Person whom *Isaiah* saw thus afflicted.

V. HE was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet opened he not his mouth: he was as meek as a Lamb led to the slaughter; as mute as a Sheep under the hands of the Shearers. When he was apprehended by the Officers, and *Peter* drew his sword to rescue him, he forbid him to use it, and presently made good the damage he had done with it. When
false

Second Sunday after EPIPHANY. 33

false witnesses appeared against him, and charged him with things which they could not prove, he let them go on, without offering any thing in his own Vindication. When they blindfolded him, and buffeted him, and spit upon him; when they made a Mock-King of him, with a scarlet robe, a reed for a scepter, and a crown of thorns; he bore all these Indignities with invincible Meekness, without opening his mouth. So exactly did he resemble those meek and innocent Creatures, to which *Isaiab* compares him.

VI. *HE was taken from prison and from judgment;* says our Translation here. In *Acts viii. 32.* the words are rendered thus; *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away.* The meaning is, that he was crucified by the colour of Authority, and the form of a Sentence, tho' unjust. For so indeed it appears from the report of it in the Gospel, and from the Confession of two principal Authors of his Sufferings. *Judas* confess'd he had betray'd innocent Blood, and *Pilate* avowed that he found no fault in him.

AND who shall declare his generation; when he is cut off from the land of the living? Who that sees him hanging upon the Cross, will suppose him to be that Messiah of the seed of *Abraham* and house of *David*, in whom all Nations of the Earth should be blessed? In this, *Who hath believed our report?* It is hard to reconcile this part of the Character, with those Expectations which the Jews had of the Messiah.

VII. *HE made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.* The interpretations of these words are very various. The LXX render them thus; *I, meaning the Lord, will give the wicked for his burial, and the rich for his death.* The Arabick version is much to the same sense. The Chaldee thus, *He will deliver the wicked into hell, and*

34 S E R M O N III. On the

the rich men who took away his life by violence. The Syriack runs thus, The wicked contributed to his burial, and the rich to his death. Other renderings there are, which I omit; and shall only observe, that the words in the Original are a poetick verse, in which way of writing it is common, for the sake of the rythm, to transpose words, which in prose would be placed otherwise; as these before us may be reduced to this order, He dyed with the wicked, and had his grave with the rich. Which was punctually fulfilled in our Lord, who was crucified and died between two Thieves; but was buried by those two rich men, Nicodemus, who embalmed him with a large quantity of Myrrhe and Aloes, and Joseph of Arimathea, who laid him in a new stately Sepulchre which he had made for himself in his own Garden, and wherein no man had ever been laid before.

AND thus I have shewn from good Authority, that this liiid chapter of *Isaiab* was understood of old to contain a Character of the Messiah; and by comparing it with the history of the Gospel, we find that it exactly agrees to our Lord Jesus.

IF it be demanded, for what reasons the Messiah suffered these things, so contrary to our common opinions of Felicity, and to those hopes of Deliverance which the *Jews* of his own time generally expected from him; I shall answer with assigning such reasons as *Isaiab* suggests to us in this chapter.

1st THEN he affirms, That *Christ* bare our griefs, and carried our sorrows. This is applied to him by St. *Matt.* viii. 17. upon occasion of his healing the sick and casting out Devils. Such Cures were the first-fruits of our Salvation by Christ, and were designed as an earnest both of his Power and Good-will to deliver us from those diseases of Body and Mind which we derive from our first Parents.

adly,

Second Sunday after EPIPHANY. 35

2dly, *HE* was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities. The Evangelists and Apostles are full of this Doctrine, that Christ endured all Adversities and Hardships, from the Manger to the Cross, for the sake and benefit of Mankind; partly for our Example, and to instruct us, that since an afflicted Condition has been honoured and sanctified by the Son of God, we should follow him cheerfully in such a straight and thorny way; not looking upon our selves as abandoned and reprobated of God, because we labour under the Afflictions of this Life; for if they come upon us, not by our own fault, but in the way of our Duty, we are assured, both by the Example and Doctrine of our heavenly Master, that in such a case it is far better to be poor than rich, to be despised than honoured, to be reviled than applauded, to mourn than to rejoice; because to such poor, afflicted, reproached People Christ has promised the riches, honours and joys of his Kingdom, and styles them his Brethren, as being conformed to the Image of his own Sufferings.

3dly, *THE* Lord bruised him, and made his Soul an offering for sin, and laid on him the iniquity of us all; that by his stripes we might be healed. This is another reason which the Gospel every where assigns for Christ's Sufferings; that they were intended to redeem us from the everlasting Punishment due to our demerits. Thus our Lord, at his first appearing in publick, was by John Baptist saluted by the style of the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world. Thus St. Paul calls him; our Passover, our Sacrifice, our Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. In his own body, says St. Peter, he bare our sins on the Cross, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we are healed. His death is styled a

D 1

Propi-

36 S E R M O N III. *On the*

Propitiation for the Sins of all the World; and he constantly testifies of himself, that he came to lay down his Life for the Ransom of Mankind, pursuant to those Prophecies which had foretold this of him.

GOD, for the Maintenance of his Justice, insisted on the Punishment of mens Sins. This Punishment was laid on one who had never offended, and was therefore the fitter to propitiate the divine Wrath. So that in this sense Christ may be said to bear our Grievs and carry our Sorrows, as the Sufferings for Sin could not otherwise belong to him, than as he was our Proxy, and bare them for us.

THESE are the Reasons which may be collected out of this liiid chapter of *Isaiab*, why the Messiah should suffer those things which were suffered by our Lord. At the same time he foresaw that these Reasons would give such little satisfaction to the World, that he cries out in these words of my Text, *Lord, who hath believed our report?* What small thanks have we for the Doctrine of the Cross? how few Converts do we make to the Faith of a spiritual Saviour? I am afraid, if all the World had been called together by God, and consulted what sort of Person they would have him to send among them for the Restorer of the fallen state of Mankind, not one of them would have chose such a Saviour as this.

A crucified Messiah, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. i. 23. is a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles. Our Prophet was aware of this, for he says, ch. viii. 14. He shall be for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, and many among them shall stumble and fall and be broken. And this St. Paul applies to Christ, Rom. ix. 33.

Second Sunday after EPIPHANY. 37

So it has proved in fact, as *Trypho* the Jew declares in *Justin Martyr*; whose words may serve to discover the sense of all modern Jews concerning our Messiah. 'Your Jesus, saith he, having by his death fallen under the extream Curse of the Law of God, which saith, *Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*, we cannot sufficiently admire that you should expect any good from God, who place your hopes in a man that was crucified.' Thus the Jews. And in like manner objected the Gentiles, as the antient Fathers of our Church assure us. 'The men of the World, says *St. Austin*, insult over us, and ask, Where is your Understanding, who worship him for a God, who was crucified?' Thus was our Lord a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles.

AND yet this Stone which the Builders refused, quickly became the chief-corner Stone in the House of God; and the Kingdom of Christ was extended beyond any Kingdom of the World that ever went before it. *Tertullian* glories, that in his time, which was very early, 'the Name of Christ was invoked, and he was acknowledged a Judge, a King, a Lord and God, by more Nations and Languages than any one Monarch, whether *Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, or Grecian*, ever reigned over.

AND this method of our Redemption, which at its first discovery was exploded by the wise men of the World as a foolish one, was afterwards, by such of those very men as came seriously to consider it, justified and extolled as the greatest instance of divine Wisdom.

THE great Blessing which God promised us of old, was this, that he would send a Person among us, who should put us all in a capacity of being happy. But what sort of Person, and what kind

of Happiness should this be? Our fancies, in ruminating upon it, presently frame an Idea, and draw out a scene of all the good things which this World can afford. But then if our great Benefactor were but a meer man, tho' he should enact the best Laws, administer them in the most exact manner, and set us the most perfect Pattern of good living in his own Practice, yet all this could procure us no more than the Happiness of this Life, which is very short and imperfect. A meer man could never accommodate us with better Habitations than what this World affords, nor with other Bodies than what we now carry about us, which are obnoxious to diseases and death; nor so fully release us from the guilt and penalty of our Sins, and so perfectly reconcile us to God, as if we had never offended him.

BUT now all the Blessings of a heavenly Kingdom, an immortal Life, a full Remission of Sins, and Peace with God, are the Gift of his Son, whom he hath sent to be our Saviour and Deliverer.

AND knowing that it is impossible for us to be happy, so long as we are under the dominion of Sin; and that we shall never leave off sinning, so long as we are under the influence of disorderly Passions and mistaken Notions of Happiness; he therefore aims, above all things, to correct these Notions and mortify these Passions in us. Which that he might do most effectually, he hath suffered all the Afflictions incident to our nature, in his own Person. By which he calls out to us to beware that we turn not out of the way of Righteousness for any pain or adversity; and to take notice in him, that the sharpest Sufferings of this Life are short, and shall quickly be crowned with a glorious Resurrection and Ascension into the Kingdom of Heaven. For so *Isaiah* concludes this chapter,

Second Sunday after EPIPHANY. 39

chapter, That when he had poured out his soul unto death, God saw his travail, or agonies, and was satisfied, and divided him a portion with the great, and a spoil with the strong: or, to speak more plainly in the words of St. Paul, Heb. ii. We see Jesus, i. e. our human Nature in Jesus, which was made a little lower than the Angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. For we having a Constitution of Flesh and Blood, he also himself took part of the same; that thro' death he might destroy him that had the power of death, i. e. the devil: And deliver them who thro' fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like to his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. To him, with the Father, &c.



D 4

SERMON



SERMON IV.

On the Third Sunday after EPIPHANY.



ISAIAH lvi. 10, 11.

His Watchmen are blind; they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

IN this Chapter there are two very different views: the former part contains Directions to the People, that when they should be carried captive to *Babylon*, they should be very observant of the divine Law, so far as it was practicable in that Country; particularly that they should sanctify the Sabbath, and demean themselves with so much Honesty and Charity, that the Strangers with whom they sojourned might be drawn to embrace their Religion, and enter into the same Covenant.

Third Sunday after EPIPHANY. 41

‘ *For though, says God, I have by former Laws separated Strangers and Eunuchs from my People; yet now I am resolved to give them a name and a place within the walls of my house; an everlasting name, better than that of Sons and of Daughters. If they will keep my Sabbaths and embrace my Covenant, I will bring them to my holy Mountain, and make them joyful in my House of Prayer: Their Burnt-offerings and their Sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine Altar. For my House shall be called a House of Prayer for all People, and I will gather others to Israel, besides those that are gathered to him.*

THUS far the Prophet recommends to the People, a pious, humble, and obliging carriage in the Land of their Captivity, giving them a plain Assurance of God’s Decree to enlarge the borders of his Church, by calling in the fulness of the *Gentiles*, and making them of the number of the true *Israelites*.

NOW here, at *ver. 9.* should begin a new Chapter, the following Matter being wholly different from the former: and so indeed *Tremellius* and *Junius* have divided it in their *Latin Translation*. For the Prophet has quite changed the Scene of his Contemplation from *Babylon* to *Jerusalem*; which is here represented to him as trodden under foot and plundered by the hostile Nations round about her. This Devastation he sets forth under a proper Metaphor. He supposes his People to be a Flock of Sheep, their Rulers both religious and civil to be Shepherds and their Dogs set to guard the Flock; and their Enemies who watched for their Destruction, he resembles to wild Beasts ravening after their Prey. And seeing how wretchedly the Flock was guarded, he cries out in an ecstasick Motion, *O all ye Beasts of the Field, come; come ye Beasts of the Forest, and devour.* Why would the Prophet desire

desire this? He did not desire it; but he knew it would be the Consequence of what follows: For, says he, *all those that should watch our Flock are blind.* That is the worst thing that can be said of Watchmen: 'Our Shepherds cannot understand; their Thoughts are so turned away from their business, that nothing can make them apprehensive of Danger; their dogs too are all dumb; they cannot bark; they have only the two worst properties of Dogs, that they devour all that comes in their way; and when they are full, they lie down and sleep, and leave the Flock to all hazards.'

I have already hinted at the meaning of this Similitude, which is intended to teach us, That *Jerusalem* had many Enemies which sought to make a Prey of her; and that such of her Sons as were at the helm of her Government, and presided as Guardians, neglected to do those things which were most conducive to her Defence and Safety.

CAN we then prove that the Princes and Rulers of *Judah*, who were cotemporary with *Isaiah*, were all negligent Governours? That is what we need not undertake to do; nor would it hold good in the case of *Hezekiah*, who has the character of a religious and vigilant King; who both fortified *Jerusalem* against the Invasion of *Sennacherib*, and did all that could be done in the way of Religion, to obtain deliverance and help from the Almighty. But *Hezekiah* was the Son of a bad Father, and the Father of a much worse Son; and to either of these Reigns the Declamation of my Text may be pointed by a Prophet who saw them both. Corruptions in Religion abounded in both: the question is, in which they most abounded.

AHAZ, the Father of *Hezekiah*, was an Idolater, and great Offender against the Divine Law. He set up graven Images, burnt Incense in the Valley

Third Sunday after EPIPHANY. 43

Valley of the Son of *Hinnom*, caused his Son to pass through the fire to *Molech*, sacrificed and burnt Incense in the high-places, and on the Hills, and under every green Tree. He sacrificed also to the Gods of *Damascus* which smote him, saying, *Because the Gods of the Kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them that they may help me.* He took away much of the furniture of the Temple, and shut it up, and filled *Jerusalem* and the Cities of *Judah* with idolatrous Altars.

SUCH was the Genius and Conduct of *Ahaz* in matters of Religion, whence we may judge of the state of his People; whose Manners no doubt gave occasion to many of those Passages in *Isaiab*, which it was natural for a holy Prophet to utter against them. And it created him no small pain and grief to see the Desolation which was begun in his time, and was shortly to be completed upon his People for such Sins.

BUT I rather think that *Isaiab*, in the words before us, had an eye to the Reign of *Manasseh* the Son of *Hezekiab*, under whom *Jerusalem* was in a more deplorable state than ever it had been before. I confess the date of *Isaiab*'s Prophecy, as we read it in the first Chapter, reaches not beyond the Reign of *Hezekiab*: But I believe all that know the Account of his Life and Death, will allow that he lived some years under *Manasseh*'s Government, and may be supposed to write of his times. The words which presently follow my Text, exactly agree with this Hypothesis, as it will appear by comparing what is said here, with what we find recorded of *Manasseh* in the Books of the *Kings* and *Chronicles*.

1st THEN, he laments the Death of a righteous Man, and the Peoples Insensibility upon it, that none of them laid it to heart, nor consider'd that *he was taken away from the evil to come.* This may

44 S E R M O N IV. *On the*

may be well understood of *Hezekiah*, who deserved that Character; whom our Prophet attended both in a dangerous fit of Sickness, and upon occasion of the King of *Babylon's* Embassy to him to congratulate his Recovery; and told him at both times, that God would bless the Remainder of his Reign with Peace and Prosperity, but that his Children should be carried Captives to *Babylon*. So that his Death was a just alarm to the People, who must needs know of this Prophecy, to expect the Accomplishment of it. And indeed it presently began to be fulfilled in his Son and Successor *Manasseh*, who for his evil Deeds was given up into the hands of the King of *Babylon*, and remain'd his Prisoner for many years. The Eyes of the righteous *Hezekiah* were not afflicted with this Sight; he was entered into Peace, and removed from this Evil, that it might not grieve him.

2dly, THE Prophet upbraids that Generation as being Sons of a Sorceress, the Seed of Adultery and Whoredom. Now of *Manasseh* it is expressly affirm'd, that *he observed times, and used Enchantments and Witchcrafts, and dealt with familiar Spirits and Wizards*. No doubt but, under the umbrage of his Authority, City and Country were full of such infernal Practices. And from him likewise, who denied himself no sensual Gratification, the People might take enormous Liberties to immerse themselves in Adulteries and Whoredoms: and so the Prophet might speak literally when he calls them a Seed of such evil-doers. However, he might truly say this of them, tho' in a figurative Sense, as they were Idolaters. For God is said in Scripture to have espoused his Church, and has taken upon him the Style and Character of a Husband in this respect; and therefore when any Member of it apostatizes from him, especially when they break their Vows to him so grossly as to embrace
the

Third Sunday after EPIPHANY. 45

the Service of strange Gods, this is called spiritual Adultery and Whoredom; which Style and Phrase occurs frequently in the Writings of this and other of the Prophets.

3dly, It was a great Aggravation of the Sin of this King and People, whether it was sensual or spiritual Whoredom, that when the Prophet sharply reprov'd them for it, they made a Jest of his words, and treated him with all the airs of Derision and Contempt. This he charges upon them in the next words; *Against whom do ye sport your selves, and make a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue?* 'I say, ye are Children of Transgression, a Seed of Falsehood; (which is the same thing in effect with what he had called them before.) And can ye deny it? If ye cannot, why do ye make such scoffs at my words?' But this is the common practice of desperate Sinners, that when their Enormities are charged home upon them, and are too flagrant to admit of any Excuse, they do all they can to turn God's Word into ridicule, and make a Jest of his Ministers; as well knowing that so much as they can lessen their Dignity and Authority, so much Victory, in the eye of the World, they gain over them. Such Scorners and Buffoons have always swarmed in the Societies of Men. *David* and *Solomon* complain loudly of them as the very pests of their times, the Vermin, Moth, and Canker of all that was holy, wise, and good. *Jeremiah* tells us, that he was the subject of daily Derision, and that every one took the liberty to mock him and make sport with him. Thus the Wisdom of God was derided in our blessed Lord. When he preached against Covetousness, the coverous *Pharisees* hooted at him. They had no other way of answering his Sermon, but to explode it and turn it into burlesque. Thus at *Athens*, the Enemies of *Socra-*

ter, who were not a match for him in fair Reasoning, employed *Aristophanes* the Comedian to expose his Character publicly on the Stage. And afterwards at *Rome*, the Flatterers of *Nero* ridiculed his wise Tutor *Seneca*, and railed at him till they had driven him from Court. The same did the Flatterers of the Emperor *Commodus*, in relation to those old wise Men who had been his Father's Counsellors.

AND thus, if we could look into all the Courts and great Conventions of Men in the world, we should hardly fail to find out this Fiend of Derision acting the part which *Isaiab* describes, and endeavouring to laugh and hiss the fear of God, and all that is serious, out of Society. It was this ludicrous Spirit which threw dirt at God's Prophets, and cover'd them with Contempt, so that when they spake to *Manasseh* and his People, they would not hear, as the Scripture testifies, 2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 10.

4thly, ANOTHER reigning Sin in *Judah*, which the Watchmen would not see, nor the Shepherds reprove, was abominable Idolatry. They inflamed themselves, says *Isaiab* in this place, with Idols under every green tree: In such Retirements they commonly practised carnal Impurities with their Idolatries, slaying Children in the Valleys to *Molech*. To the smooth stones of the stream (rather of the Valley, where Statues and Pillars were erected to Idols) hast thou poured out a drink-offering, and offered a meat-offering, (rather a Meal-offering; for it was usually a composition of nothing but Meal and Oyl.) Upon a lofty mountain hast thou set thy bed, or couch, whereon they reposed themselves at Meals, and eat part of the Oblation. It intimates their sacrificing in high-places. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance. The meaning is this, That as
God

God had commanded them to write some Passages of his Law on the Doors of their Houses, that they might always have it for the Subject of Meditation when they went out, and when they came in: So in their practice of Idolatry, they imitated this custom, and placed about their Doors either the Picture or some other Memorial of their imaginary Deity, as hoping they should have the better Success in what they went about.

Now this Picture of Jewish Idolatry which the Prophet here presents to us, agrees exactly with the History of *Manasseh's* reign, who besides the Corruptions which he practised in common with his Grandfather *Abaz*; added moreover Altars and Groves for *Baal*, and for all the host of Heaven: he set up a carved Image in the House of God; he made *Judah* and the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* to err, and to commit worse Abominations than the *Amorites*, or any of the Heathens round about them.

HERE was a loud call for Zeal in all the Magistrates and Ministers who had any share in the Government of the People. The Priests and Levites, whose peculiar business it was to understand the Law of God, and to teach it others, could not be ignorant what dreadful Judgments it denounces against those that honour the Creature more than the Creator. They must know that the way they were in, was the high road to Destruction. They saw that it was actually begun amongst them, that *Israel* was gone into Captivity, and that *Judah* was daily threatned and alarmed with the same Judgment by *Isaiab*, and many other of the Prophets who were cotemporary with him; by whom the Lord spake, saying, *Because Manasseh has done all these abominations, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whose heareth it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem*
the

48 S E R M O N IV. On the

the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Abab; i. e. they shall have all one and the same destructive fate: And I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down, i. e. I will exhaust it of its Inhabitants. And I will forsake the remnant of mine Inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies.

THIS was plain warning: What would the Prophet have more? Why, he would have all in Authority give credit to this warning, and proceed thereupon to a thorough Reformation of the reigning Impieties and Corruptions. A few Prophets, who could only denounce the impending Judgments of God, but were in no place or station to execute his Laws, were easily run down and disregarded when the hand of the Government was against them, and when false Prophets were spirited up, as it commonly happen'd, to oppose them with pretences of Divine Revelation, in the name of the Lord.

HE would therefore have the Watchmen and the Shepherds, *i. e.* the Priests and Magistrates, who were entrusted with the Government, to answer their Characters, and faithfully discharge the Duties of their respective Stations. He presents them with a Catalogue of crying Sins, provoking Iniquities, and tells them, 'These are the Traitors
' which will open the Gates to your Enemies. So
' long as you harbour these within your walls, it
' is in vain and to no purpose to treat Alliances,
' and put your trust in the multitude of Aids and
' Assistants. By doing this, you do but make haste
' to pull down the Judgments of God upon your
' heads. For he has denounced a heavy Curse upon
' those who make an arm of Flesh their hope,
' and in their ways depart from him. Because this
' is in effect to disclaim his Providence, and to
tell

‘tell him they can find a way to thrive and prosper, while by provoking him, they make him their Enemy.’

Whom hast thou feared, says God by our Prophet, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away: Vanity shall take them. But he that putteth his trust in me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain.

THIS is no new doctrine; it is the same uniform voice of God from the beginning to the end of the Law and the Prophets. And therefore one would hope it should make an useful impression upon Men who had seen it verified in the captivity of their brethren, and were themselves in continual danger of suffering the same Calamity. But you hear what the Prophet says in my Text. *His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark.*

WHAT could be the reason of this supine negligence, that Men should be so indolent when they almost saw the Enemies swords at their throats, when they almost heard their houses falling upon their heads, and their Conquerors crying out to them to depart and go to *Babylon*? Did the fear of *Manasseh* strike them dumb? He was but twelve years old when he began to reign, and therefore to his Courtiers it was owing that he was mis-led and seduced into destructive Courses. What was it, which so blinded and stupified those Spiritual Watchmen the Priests, who should be quick at discerning, and impartial in setting forth the dreadful consequences of crying Sins? Was it the smiles and favours of superior Sinners which charm’d them? Was it, the fat of their offerings and oblations, which cast them into a deep sleep? Was it their own infidelity, and

36 SERMON IV. *On the*

small sense of the last Judgment and a future State, which made them so careless?

It is the remark of old *Roman* Authors, that when *Hannibal* with his *Carthaginians* hovered about their City, and was in a fair way to subdue them, All the Citizens were very devout in their Religion, very serious and diligent in their Affairs, very chaste and modest in their Conversation. And long before this, when the *Gauls* besieged them, they behaved with the like Sobriety, and there is an account of a family, which bravely ventured out of the City in the face of the whole Army, and went and offered sacrifice at a place which they had used some good distance from the Gate, and returned again in safety. An eminent instance of Intrepidity in the *Pagan* Devotion. But I know not how it comes to pass, that those who call themselves the servants of the true God, and have most certainly had the direction of his own word, have so commonly acted that perfidious, ungodly part represented in my Text, as to be most insensible of the wrath of God, where there was the greatest reason to apprehend it.

Ah poor, unhappy *Jerusalem*, how sadly wast thou guarded when thy Watchmen were blind! how quickly was thy flock given up a prey to the beasts of the field, when thy Shepherds were ignorant Wretches, or, which is something worse, such as would not understand! When the dogs which should have defended thee, were dumb, and good for nothing but to feed themselves, and lye down and sleep! Had all these, or I will venture to say, but the greater part of them, been faithful in their places and offices, the *Chaldean* Army had never burnt thy houses, nor carried away thy children captives to *Babylon*.

What can such Guardians think of themselves? Indeed the grand difficulty is, to make them

Third Sunday after EPIPHANY. 11

them think at all. For if they would but once seriously regard that Book which they profess to make the rule of their Duty, they would there find, that they must one day give a sad account to God, the sovereign Shepherd of all, for betraying his flocks into the Enemies hands. The Prophet *Ezekiel*, who lived under the *Babylonian Captivity*, reads the doom of such Shepherds in abundance of places: Particularly Chap. xxxiv. *Son of Man*, says God to him, *prophecie against the Shepherds of Israel*, *prophecie and say, Thus saith the Lord God unto the Shepherds, Wo to the Shepherds of Israel, that feed themselves. Should not the Shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool; ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye sought that which was left. Therefore will I require my flock at your hand.*

THIS is very intelligible; and yet he is still plainer in the foregoing Chapter. *Son of Man*, when I bring the sword upon a nation, if the Watchman blow the trumpet and warn the People of it; whosoever hears and takes not warning, but dies by the sword, his blood shall be upon his own head. But if the Watchman blow not the trumpet, nor warn the People, and any man perish by the sword, his blood will I require at the Watchman's hand. So thou, *Son of Man*, I have set thee for a Watchman to the house of Israel. Thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. If thou warn not the wicked man to turn from his iniquity, and he die in it; his blood will I require at thy hand. But if thou warn him, and yet notwithstanding thy warnings he die in his iniquity; he shall perish, but thou hast delivered thy own Soul.

THUS we hear what God requires of all those whom he has appointed to watch for the Salvation of his People. The words I have recited are evidently the words of God; being most perfectly agreeable to the Divine Wisdom and Justice. And they plainly tell all spiritual Watchmen, that they must, upon the peril of their Souls, discharge their trust faithfully. They are not at liberty to follow their own ways, and pursue their temporal gain and ease and safety above all things, as *Isaiah* complains they did in his time. They may not be silent when they ought to speak, nor shut their eyes when they should see. For in so doing they will lose their own Souls, as well as the Souls of those committed to their charge.

LET us then beseech the universal Shepherd and Watchman, who never slumbereth nor sleepeth, to inspire all his Ministers with a zeal for his Glory, that they may constantly speak the truth, and boldly rebuke vice, after the example of our great Master, who kept back nothing of the Divine Will from his People. To him, &c.





SERMON V.

On the Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY.



ISAIAH lviii. 3.

Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seeest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold in the day of your Fast, you find pleasure, and exact all your labours.



S in our present state of Religion, so likewise in the ancient Church of God, there were days of fasting and humiliation of divers sorts and for several reasons. Some were stated and anniversary, appointed by the Law, either to make a general attonement for the Sins of the People, or to bewail the commission of some grievous trespass, such as the making of the golden Calf. Others were occasional, enjoined by authority for addressing to God and averting his anger, when some heavy judgment of war, pestilence, famine, &c. was actually inflicted, or with great

reason apprehended to be ready to fall upon them. Of this latter sort I take that Fast to have been, which is here alluded to in this Chapter. For it appears from the Peoples Expostulation with God in the words of my Text, that they had fasted for the obtaining of some favour which was not granted them.

THIS disappointment they laid to the charge of God and Religion. For as to their own part, they were persuaded they had done the duties, and merited the rewards of pious Men. They attended the daily exercise of Divine Worship, in praying, reading, and hearing the Law of God, as if they had nothing more at heart, than to know his will and to do it: they were acquainted with the Statutes and Ordinances of their Religion so perfectly, that *Josephus* says, they could recite them as readily as their own names. They likewise observed solemn Fasts, whereon they wore Sackcloth, or some other kind of mourning, and refrained from their ordinary meals.

AND yet after all their Supplications and Penances, they found no good effect of them; their affairs did not change for the better; God did not arise to help them and deliver them from their Enemies and other hardships: but his afflicting hand lay as heavy upon them as ever.

THIS moved them to murmur against God, and justify themselves, as confident Men are prone to do, who, if their secular and carnal ends are not presently served by their Religion, account it a vain unprofitable task to serve God any longer, and fall to expostulating with him, as if he were deficient in power or goodness, deaf to the prayers of his own appointing, and unfaithful to the promises which he has made to those that call upon him. *Wherefore, say they, have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no notice of us?* Now

Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 31

Now to silence these murmurs, and put a stop to such exclamations, God sends *Isaiah* to them, to assure them that he saw their manner of keeping Fasts, and all their outward forms and tokens of humiliation: But that he did not answer their prayers upon those occasions, because they did not pursue those good ends of fasting which alone could render the duty acceptable to him, and useful to the publick. He therefore proceeds to teach them by the Prophet how widely different their Fast was from that which he required of them.

AND thus he begins. *Behold*, says he, *in the day of your Fast, ye find pleasure.* And indeed it had been well if they had taken a pleasure in approaching to God, as they would seem to do. But the pleasure which they really took was of a quite contrary nature. It was such a pleasure as ancient Writers tell us our own People took before the Reformation, when our Kalendar was almost as full of holydays as working days. Upon which holydays it was highly penal for any poor Man to be found about the business of his calling: But for rich and poor to ramble abroad upon such days, and exercise themselves in sports and pastimes, or to entertain themselves with drinking and talking in Ale-houses, or with the plays and shows of a Theatre, was esteemed no fault at all. And how much the seasons which are set apart for humiliation, are still perverted amongst us by such pleasures, I need not set forth at large. In this I fear we are very little reformed from our forefathers: as little as they were from the *Jews* here complained of: whose pleasures though not exactly parallel, yet had a near resemblance to these of ours.

BUT now for Men professing the fear of God, to addict themselves to such pleasures upon days set apart for his worship, what a contradiction is

this to their profession? It is plainly robbing him of that honour which is more especially due to him upon such days: It is affronting him with those Sensualities which are then most odious to him, as coming into competition with his own service, and being preferred before it. It is defrauding our Souls of that spiritual food which is most convenient for them: for instead of raising them up to God, and refining them with heavenly contemplations, according to the design of the day, we load them with earth, and immerse them in the sinful pleasures and vanities of this World. And will we call this a holy, and an acceptable day to the Lord, which we thus employ above other days, in the service of Sin and Satan? Be not deceived; God is not so easily mocked: this is not the day, not the business of the day, which he hath chosen.

THERE was another sensual pleasure which the *Jews* probably indulged on their fasting days, and that was to conclude them with a kind of feast. So that the abstinence of the day, instead of being a mortification to the flesh, and a help to spiritual meditations, as it was designed, only whetted them to fall to their Supper with the greater gust. Which how apt they might be to think of all day, and how likely to run into noisy mirth and jollity at night, we may guess from some intimations which *Isaiah* gives us, particularly Chapter xxii. 12. where he speaks of a day which God appointed for a Fast, but the People, by their extravagant eating of flesh and drinking of Wine upon it, made it look much more like a Festival. I am afraid this is one of their corrupt traditions which is derived down from them to the present age. For Travellers inform us that in the eastern Countries, *Jews* and *Turks*, upon their stated Fasts, will keep the day strictly enough; but as soon as

the

Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 37

the stars appear in the sky, they fall to their Viands, and abandon themselves to a mad kind of mirth the greatest part of the night.

II. GOD upbraids the *Jews* with their Inhumanity towards their Servants, that *upon their fasting days, they exacted all their labours*; they compelled them to work at their Trades, or in their Fields and Vineyards as much upon solemn Fasts, as if they had been common days. Wherein they were guilty of a two-fold Injury: 1st, To their Bodies, which should have rested on those days as much as on their Sabbaths. 2^{dly}, To their Souls, which should have enjoyed Communion with God in his Worship, for the learning of his Law, for the obtaining pardon of their Sins, and for making provision for their everlasting Salvation. But as the Masters ordered it, those days were of no benefit to poor Servants, because they were obliged to work upon them as at other times.

BUT I should observe here, that the vulgar *Latin*, instead of *Labours* has *Debtors*, and the margin of our *English Bible* has, *things wherewith ye grieve others*; whence we may gather this sense, that the greater sort, notwithstanding their Fasts, on which occasions they ought to have shewn mercy, continued still their Oppressions of the Poor, the Fatherless and Widows, often complained of, and their rigorous Usage and hard Exactions of their indigent Debtors, contrary to God's Injunctions by *Moses* and the Prophets. Thus *Nehemiah* chap. v. reports, that there happening a drought in his time which caused a scarcity of Provisions, the richer sort who had Corn sold it at such unreasonable rates, that the poor Purchasers were forced to mortgage to them their Houses, Lands, and Vineyards, for Bread to keep their Families from starving. And at the same time the Tax or Tribute which they paid to the King of *Persia*,

Parsha, was levied upon them with such rigor, that they were compelled to sell their Children into servitude to their Brethren, for present money to satisfy the Collectors, and had no means left to redeem them, because they had parted with their Estates for Bread, as before.

UNDER such strait circumstances the wealthier sort of People should have treated their poor Brethren with compassion, and not have made such advantage of their Necessities, as to strip them of all they were worth, even of their very Children. But of such like Oppressions I believe they were guilty in *Isaiah's* time, from several hints which he gives us, as well in this chapter as in other places of his Book.

III. It is farther charged upon this People, that *they fasted for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.* Which some interpret thus, that while they were seeking to appease the wrath of God, and escape the fury of foreign Enemies, yet in their Hearts they were angry and at enmity one with another, and meditating how to be revenged. Some think that in the exercise of their Pleasures and Pastimes which they used upon such days, they were apt to fall out and fight, as 'tis too common among our People at this day. Others understand the words of a Custom which they had to account with their Debtors upon these days, as having more leisure now than at other times; and that they often transacted such matters with much heat and passion.

WHATEVER were the grounds of their debates and contentions, it is certain from this Charge, that their Fasts were disturbed with them, and the voice of their Devotions was drowned and lost in such disorders. * How can ye expect, says the * Prophet, that your Prayers should be heard on * high, when the noise of your Quarrels so much exceeds

Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 50

exacted them? This was to imitate the frantick runs of Idolaters on their religious days; tho' even they had more pacifick rules, if they could have kept them. For it was a Law of the twelve Tables of the Romans, that upon such Solemnities People should carefully govern their tongues, and forbear to be clamorous and venacious to one another. *Peris Juris observatio.* And it was an excellent saying of a Roman Emperor, and very fit to be practised upon such days more especially, that *we should be in peace with all men, and at war with nothing but sinful Lusts and Passions.*

IV. GOD blames this People for thinking to impose upon him with an outward shew and garb of Penitents, while in their Hearts they were nothing less. *Is it such a Fast,* says he, *that I have chosen, for a man to afflict himself for a day? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will then call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord?* We are not to conclude from these Words, that God will be offended with us, for using a habit proper for fasting and humiliation. We know that the best of his servants, such as *Job* and *David*, put on sackcloth and ashes upon such occasions. Nor does our blessed Saviour condemn it: he only forbids us to make ostentation of our private Fasts by such tokens: but leaves us in publick free to conform to the usual Expressions, in which even Nature and common Sense will direct us. But will any man call the outward Expressions a sufficient Performance of the Duty? These Jews were reprov'd, were fond to think so; but God shews them their error, and instructs them how to make their Fasts acceptable to him, by observing the following Particulars.

1st, HE commands them to loose the bands of wickedness, to unbind the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed

oppressed go free, and to break every yoke. These are brief hints of the Severities which the greater Jews exercised over the less. They extorted from them unreasonable Usury for the loan of money, which the Debtors not being able to pay, they were obliged to make over all they were worth to their Creditors by mortgages and acknowledgments in writing. Of such Writings the LXX Greek Interpreters understood those Instruments which are here called, *the bands of wickedness*. For the poor Debtors were entangled in them by the wicked Extortion and insatiable Avarice of the money'd men, who by furnishing them with a little bread, wormed them out of their Estates, and reduced their Families under a yoke of servitude, as was noted before.

‘ Now, says God, if you would move me to
 ‘ compassion by your Fasts, then do you shew pity
 ‘ to your unfortunate Brethren, whose houses and
 ‘ lands you have swallowed up, in exchange for a
 ‘ few morsels of bread which you exhibited to
 ‘ them in their extreme Necessity. Cancel those
 ‘ wicked Bonds by which you claim a right and
 ‘ title to their Estates. Release them from the
 ‘ burden of those Debts which you have unjustly
 ‘ heaped upon them, and for which they never re-
 ‘ ceived any valuable Consideration. Restore their
 ‘ Children from that condition of slavery to which
 ‘ you have reduced them: don’t yoke them and
 ‘ fetter them like so many brutes, but suffer them
 ‘ to enjoy that freedom wherein they were born,
 ‘ and which it is my Will they shall still enjoy.
 ‘ In like manner set at liberty such servants as were
 ‘ bound to you for seven years, and have attend-
 ‘ ed your business all that time. To detain them
 ‘ any longer against their will, you know is for-
 ‘ bidden you; tho’ you have often done it in con-
 ‘ tempt of my Law. But now put an end to this
 ‘ oppression;

Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 63

oppression; and as you desire me to release you from your sufferings, so do you release your poor Brethren from the hardships which they suffer under you. ——— This I take to be the Sense more at large, of that brief Injunction which God lays upon the Fasters here before us, to let their oppressed go free.

2dly, To make their Fast acceptable to God, he commands them *to deal their bread to the hungry, to bring poor outcasts into their houses, to clothe the naked* as they shall have opportunity, and *not to hide themselves from their own Flesh.* These works of Charity are very proper to accompany the duty of Fasting and Abstinence, upon two accounts. 1st, Because People of plentiful circumstances, by retrenching the expences which they formerly laid out upon their own Food and Raiment, will be enabled to feed and clothe the greater number of poor helpless Wretches, who are in a starving condition, and want their daily bread. 2dly, By tasting the Hardships of life in Acts of Mortification, they will be the more effectually moved to compassionate and succour all the sons and daughters of Affliction. They will be the more apt to sympathize with them, to consider them as men of the same mould and frame with themselves, to rejoice with those that do rejoice, and weep with those that weep: in short, to fulfil that great Law of common Humanity, and love their Neighbours as themselves.

THE wide distance which there is between the Ranks and Stations of Mankind in this World, has caused many of the higher sort to look upon their Inferiors as Creatures not only of less worth, but even of a different Species from themselves. The rich man in the Gospel, who was clothed delicately and fared sumptuously, was so dazzled with the splendor of his own house, that he could not

not distinguish poor *Lazarus* from the dogs at his gate. Nay these brutes were much better fed than the Beggar, as they are at this day in many parts of the World. Those who have seen *Constantinople* tell us, that the *Turks* are very careful to preserve the life of dogs, and to redeem birds out of cages and give them their Liberty, while they imprison and torture and shed the blood of poor christian Slaves without remorse. But we need not go from home for instances of such Inhumanity. For how many are there among ourselves who bestow much time and cost and care in pampering the Brutes, while their poor Fellow-creatures, created after the same Image, redeemed by the same Saviour, and whom he vouchsafes to call his Brethren and his Members, are hungry and thirsty, out-casts and naked, sick and in prison; from all which Miseries many of them might be rescued by the same Cost and Care which is wastefully lavished upon useless Brutes.

God who knows the ways of all Men, has guarded against this abuse of Riches; and therefore in the Precept here before us he has commanded the richer sort *to consider the poor as their own flesh*: Which if they could once be prevailed on to do, much exhortation to Charity could not be wanted. For, as *St. Paul* reasons very justly, *No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.*

3dly, A farther Condition which God proposes self keeping a Fast acceptable to him, is, *to refrain from putting forth the finger, and speaking vanity*: i. e. not to provoke, threaten, expose, or scoff at others by word or gesture. There being a Language of the hand as well as of the tongue, the putting forth of the finger is sometimes expressive of Defiance and Threatning, sometimes of Contempt and Ridicule; and in all cases of Strife and Con-

tention

Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 69

tion: it serves much to exasperate, and is therefore forbidden, as well as the venomous Darts and exorbitant Sallics of the tongue.

THE speaking of Vanity is one of the most extensive and reigning Sins in the World; it makes up the greatest part of most Mens Conversation. Slandering and defaming, backbiting and detraction, deceits in dealings, flatteries and false informations, proud bowings, and idle stories, together with that corrupt and filthy communication, and that torrent of oaths and curses which are continually flowing out of the mouths of Men, are all comprized in this one Expression, of *speaking Vanity*; and must be put away from the midst of us, as God here requires, before our Fasts, or indeed any other religious Exercise, can avail any thing for the good of the Publick.

Lastly, If we will compleat the Fast which God hath chosen, he tells us *we must turn away our feet from violating his Sabbath*; our feet must not carry us away from the duties of it, to walk abroad, or to sit in houses of pleasure and diversion, as the manner of some is, when they are called to attend on divine Service, and to join with their Brethren in the Worship of God. You must forbear doing your own Will on this day, *not walking in your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words*; as God expressly commands you: But you must sanctifie it and make it honourable by religiously keeping it, and bring your self to take delight in the Duties of it; which you will never be able to do, except you frequent them, and pay a diligent indispensable Attendance to them.

And thus I have drawn out the substance of God's Answer to the Jews of *Isaiah's* time, which they expostulated with him saying, *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted*

filled our soul, and thou takest no notice of us? ' Be-
 ' cause, says the divine Answer, your fasting is no
 ' more than a superficial, formal Exercise. You
 ' put on a grave look and a mourning habit, and
 ' come and bow down before me, and afflict your
 ' selves for a day, and then think you have well
 ' and fully discharged the duty, which you thus
 ' practise year after year, when all the while you
 ' suffer grievous Offences against God and man to
 ' encrease and multiply among you; whereas you
 ' ought to reform them and root them out, which
 ' is the very end and business of your fasting.
 ' You know the Sum of your Duty consists in the
 ' love of God and man, in both which respects
 ' how strangely are you wanting! Don't you hear
 ' my Name blasphemed? Don't you see my Sab-
 ' baths and Sanctuary prophaned? Can you be
 ' deaf to the Cries of those that are oppressed in
 ' their Estates and Liberties, and can get no re-
 ' dress of Justice and Judgment? Are there not
 ' many of your poor Brethren, who are perishing
 ' thro' hunger, cold and nakedness? whom
 ' you might easily rescue from destruction, if you
 ' would but employ that money to their relief,
 ' which you now keep useless by you, or spend
 ' upon your Vices. Reform these Abuses, and let
 ' Mercy and Goodness be the fruits of your fast-
 ' ing, and then I will hear you.

' Then, says he, shall thy Light break forth as
 ' the morning (which is the best and pleasantest
 ' Light) and thy health shall spring forth speedi-
 ' ly: and thy Righteousness shall go before; and
 ' the glorious Lord shall be thy re-re-ward, to bring
 ' thee up safe out of adversity. Then shalt thou
 ' call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry,
 ' and he shall say, Here I am: if thou take away
 ' from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting
 ' forth of the finger, and speaking vanity. And
 ' if

Fourth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 65

if thou draw out thy Soul to the hungry, and
satisfie the afflicted; then shall thy light rise in
obscurity, yea thy darkness shall be as bright as
the noon-day. And the Lord shall guide thee
continually, and satisfie thy Soul in drought, and
make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a
watered garden, like a spring whose waters fail
not. Thy Posterity shall build up the old
waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundati-
ons of many Generations: and thou shalt be
called, The repairer of the Breach, the restorer
of the Paths of inhabited Cities. When thou
shalt delight thy self in the Lord, I will cause
thee to ride upon the high places of the Earth,
and feed thee with the heritage of *Jacob* thy Fa-
ther: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.
To him be ascribed all Honour and Glory World
without end.





SERMON VI.

On the Fifth Sunday after EPIPHANY.



ISAIAH lxiv, 1.

O that thou wouldst rent the Heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.

FROM the 10th and 11th verses of this Chapter it appears that this Scene of *Isaiab's* Vision lyes in the Captivity of *Babylon*. For thus the words run: *Thy holy cities are a wilderness; Sion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste.* Now it is certain that *Isaiab* died many years before the beginning of this Captivity, while the Temple was yet standing, and *Jerusalem* inhabited. And therefore we must say, that in contemplation of their ruines, which he foresaw by virtue of his prophetick Spirit, he made this Prayer for the use of the poor Captives; wherein he teaches them to cry mightily to God, that he would look down upon them with an eye of Pity, and graciously restore them

First Sunday after EPIPHANY 67

them to their former Estate: This request he would have them enforce by the following Arguments:

1st, By pleading God's former Deliverances, which he had vouchsafed to their Fore-fathers. Thou didst, says he, work terrible things for them, beyond all that they could wish or desire. Thou camest down; the mountains melted at thy Presence. Even as Sinai was moved at the Presence of the God of Israel; the sea saw thee and fled; Jordan was driven back. O therefore rend the Heavens again, and come down for our deliverance. Manifest thy self in the like awful Appearances, that thy name may be known to thine Adversaries, and that the nations may tremble at thy Presence.

ISRAEL, in addressing to God for necessary Reliefs, love to commemorate what great things of old he had done for them, in rescuing them from the Tyranny of Pharaoh, in furnishing their table for them in the Desert, in giving them full Possession of the Land of Canaan, and defending them in it from all their Enemies round about. All which parts of the divine Government were administred with such mighty Signs and Wonders as plainly demonstrated the Arm of the most High made bare in the protection of his People.

THIS is a rational ground of Prayer, That God hath wrought such wonderful Works in the World, as abundantly show that he is the supreme King, and doth whatever he pleases in it. Therefore he is the proper Resort and Refuge of Mankind in all their distress.

2^{dly}, THE inexhaustible treasure of God's Power, Wisdom and Goodness, was an encouragement to Israel to pray to him. For tho' they saw no issue of their Captivity, no more than their Fathers once did of their passage at the Red-sea, yet

all was naked and open to the eyes of him who was their Keeper and Guide. Tho' they were furrounded with such walls and barrs of their oppressors, that which way soever they looked, their deliverance was impossible in human estimation, yet they had no cause to despair, if they did but consider that they were in the hands of that God, who had such great things in store for those that trust in him, as were never seen, nor heard, nor thought of, since the foundation of the World.

3dly, T H E Y were to enforce their Prayers from that excellent property of God, which is, ever to have mercy and to forgive. *Thou meetest him, says Isaiah, that rejoyceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.* Which words, somewhat obscure in themselves, may best be explained by the confession of God's servants, grounded upon their experience of his Mercies. It is then, the humble Acknowledgment of the Church, That God deals not with us after our Sins, nor-rewards us according to our Iniquities; that he is more ready to hear than we to pray, preventing us with the Influences of his Spirit, and attracting us with the bands of Love. That Fury is not in him, but that he deferreth his Anger, and refraineth from the Transgressor, forbearing to cut him off. That with much long-suffering he endureth even those who are vessels of wrath. That tho' he cause grief, yet he will have compassion according to the multitude of his Mercies. For he doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men. That many a time he turneth away his Anger, and suffereth not his whole Displeasure to arise: for he considereth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust. That his Wrath endureth but a little while, but his Favour is for an age: Heaviness

ness may last for a night; but Joy cometh in the morning. He declares that Judgment is his strange Work, that he hides his face but for a moment; that he will not be always chiding; that he retaineth not his Wrath for ever, that he repents of the evil which he had threatned, and turns away from the fierceness of his Anger, and in the midst of Judgment remembers Mercy. Insomuch that the worst of Sinners, when converted, have confest with raptures of love and admiration, *How great is thy goodness, O Lord! there is mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared: and the children of men shall put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.*

THUS good and gracious is the King of Heaven, when we call upon him. But to whom? To those who rejoyce in working Righteousness, and remember him in his ways. There are Sinners of various denominations, who are excluded from the favour of Reconciliation with God: and they are made known in his Word under the characters of brutish, stupid, unthinking Wretches; such as are wise in their own conceit; such as are of a perverse, obstinate and scornful Spirit; such as offend of malicious Wickedness, and like the deaf Adder, refuse to hear the voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely. But those who thro' Ignorance, Inadvertence, or the strength of Temptation having unhappily deviated from the Law of God, have notwithstanding the generosity to hearken to his Word, to acknowledge the Truth and Reason of it, to see their errors, to condemn their mis-deeds, and take a pleasure in correcting them, and doing that which is right and good; such as these God prevents with his Mercy, and meets with the open arms of his tender Compassions, he puts forth the hand of his loving-kindness to guide them and lead them into the right way both of Faith and Practice. He opens their

eyes to see, that He was wroth with them for no other reason, but because they had sinned, and run into ways destructive of their own Salvation; but that by a stedfast adherence to his Laws, they should find his Wrath wholly abated, and his never-failing Grace and Favour extended towards them. This I take to be the meaning of these words: *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth, and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth, for we have sinned: in thine is continuance, and we shall be saved.*

And they recommend themselves to God by a fair ingenuous Confession of their Sins, saying, *we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags: and there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.* This deplorable state of Piety and Virtue we have often seen in the accounts of this People, as given us by the sacred Writers; which rendered them too loathsome for the Regards of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold such Iniquity.

BUT a great and sovereign Means whereby Sinners may heal the Breach between God and themselves is, to make a penitent Confession of their Sins, which they are here taught to do. And so the sacred Oracles every where direct, saying, *Turn your selves from all your Transgressions; so Iniquity shall not be your ruin. Judge yourselves, and ye shall not be judged of the Lord. Make your Confession, and say unto him, We have sinned against thee, O Lord, we have sinned, and done perversely: we have dealt very corruptly, and have not kept the Statutes which thou hast commanded us, neither have we been obedient to thy Laws.* This is declared to be the Will of God; *He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper; but whose confesseth and for-*

saketh

‘maketh them shall have mercy. Turn ye, faith
 ‘the Lord, to me with all your heart; be afflict-
 ‘ed, and mourn, and weep; let your Laughter be
 ‘turned into Mourning, and your Joy into Heavi-
 ‘ness. Let the wicked forsake his Way, and the
 ‘unrighteous man his Thoughts; and let him re-
 ‘turn unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy up-
 ‘on him; and to our God, for he will abundant-
 ‘ly pardon.’ This is the Language of those who
 are awakened to a due sense of their Sins; ‘We
 ‘lye down in our Shame, and our Confusion co-
 ‘vereth us. We blush to lift up our faces to God:
 ‘for our Iniquities are increased over our heads,
 ‘and our Trespas is grown up even to the Hea-
 ‘vens. Our Transgressions are multiplied before
 ‘us, our Sins testify against us. How should man
 ‘be just with God? If he will contend with him,
 ‘he cannot answer him one of a thousand. Whom
 ‘I would not answer, tho’ I were righteous, but
 ‘would lay my hand upon my mouth, and beg
 ‘of him not to enter into Judgment with me.
 ‘Surely it is meet to be said unto God, If I have
 ‘done Iniquity, I will do so no more. If any
 ‘man say, I have sinned, and perverted that which
 ‘was right, and it profited me not; God will
 ‘deliver his Soul from going into the Pit, and
 ‘his life shall see the light: Because he consider-
 ‘eth, and turneth away from all his Transgressions
 ‘which he hath committed, he shall surely live, he
 ‘shall not die.

THIS, I say, this free and humble Confession
 of our Sins against God, should always accompany
 our Prayers, as being most acceptable to the di-
 vine Majesty, most apt to obtain his Pardon and
 Reconciliation, the most righteous Sentence we
 can pass upon ourselves, and the surest way to give
 relief and ease to our troubled minds. For which
 reasons the dearest of God’s Children, the most

eminent of his Saints, have glorified him with the lowest abasements of themselves, and acknowledgments of their unworthiness of the least of his Mercies. How many penitential Prayers do we meet with in the Book of Psalms? where the sacred Author spares not to publish his Sins to the World, and declares that they outnumbered the hairs of his head; that they were like a grievous burden, too heavy for him to bear; that they so oppressed him, that he was not able to lift up his eyes to God. That while he kept silence, and suppressed them in his own mind, he had no rest day nor night; they proved like a fire in his bowels, and consumed his marrow: But when he laid them open without guile, and arraigned himself for them at the divine Tribunal, he tasted the sweetness of Pardon, and the blessing of inward Peace and Comfort. His Iniquities were no longer imputed, his Sins were blotted out of the Book of God's remembrance.

How much God prefers humble Confession before Self-justification, may be seen by what Christ says of the Pharisee and Publican who went up to the Temple to pray, *Luke xviii.* 'The Pharisee, says he, stood and prayed thus: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tythes of all that I possess. And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, God be merciful to me a Sinner. I tell you, says our Lord, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

5thly, ANOTHER Argument whereby the Captives were to plead with God for a Restoration,

tion, was the nearness of relation which he bare to them. O Lord, say they, *thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our potter; we are all the work of thine hand.* As therefore it is the duty of Parents to educate and preserve those Children whom they have brought into the World; so Men being the handywork of God, are thereby warranted to invoke him as their Father, and upon the ground of that Relation, to seek to him for his protection and blessing, and for relief in all their necessities.

BUT *Israel* had a more special reason to recommend themselves to God under the character of his Children, because he had chosen them out of all the Families of the earth, to be a peculiar People to himself, and had entred into covenant with *Abraham* to crown him and his seed with the choicest of his blessings. And therefore when God sends *Moses* to *Pharaoh*, to demand the release of *Israel*, he claims them as his own, in this style, *Exod. iv. 22. Israel is my Son, my first-born: let him go, that he may serve me. If thou refuse, behold, I will slay thy Son, even thy first-born.* Consonant to this is the language of *Moses* and the Prophets afterwards. *Is not he thy Father that bought thee?* says *Moses* to *Israel* now brought out of *Egypt*, *Deut. xxxii. hath not he made thee and established thee?* And by our Prophet *Isaiab* he cries, *Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the Womb; Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb.*

UPON the score of this relation God's People often make their addresses, and are urgent with him to be gracious and favourable. For even as a Father pitieth his Children, says the Psalmist, *Psal. ciii. 13. so is the Lord merciful to them that fear*

fear him. But most pathetick is the Prophet's intercession in the Chapter before thy Text, and most fit to be subjoin'd to what I am saying on this head. *Look down, says he, from Heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the founding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards us? Are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting.*

Now having found the relation of Parent and Children between God and his People, we may well conclude, from the excellence of his nature, that his loving-kindness is much stronger than that of Men. And to this agrees the reasoning of our blessed Lord, *Mat. vii.* that if we can trust earthly Parents, that they will not knowingly and willfully give hurtful things to their Children; much rather may we depend upon the goodness of our heavenly Father, that he will give us nothing but what is convenient for us. And again he says, *Chap. v.* that if we would approve our selves the children of God, we must do good to our Enemies, after his example, who gives his Sun and his Rain both to the just and unjust. And lastly, he sets forth the tenderness of his fatherly compassion by that saying of *Isaiah, xlix. 15.* *Can a Woman forget her sucking Child, that she should not have compassion on the Son of her Womb? possibly she may: yet will not I forget Sion, saith the Lord.*

THUS to consider God in the relation of a Father, is a proper motive to send us often to our Prayers; to conceive of him as most able and willing to relieve us, is a means to fill us with faith and hope when we call upon him: And if with the returning Prodigal in the Gospel, we will

Fifth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 71

will but humbly confess that we are unworthy to be called his Children; and desire but to be reckoned among the meanest of his Servants, then will he graciously arise and meet us, as both the Prophet and the Evangelist represent him, and receive us with the arms of his mercy.

6thly, THE next Argument of intercession which the Prophet offers, is an inference from this. *Behold, O Lord, says he, consider, we beseech thee, that we are all thy People: Be not wroth very sore, neither remember iniquity for ever.* 'As thou art pleased to own us for thy Children, so treat us with that gentleness and tender affection which such relation imports.' Good-tempered Parents will not only forgive the inadvertencies and lighter faults of their Children; but even in great offences they are more reconcilable to their own; than they are to strangers who have no relation to them. This is what *Isaiah* pleads in the foregoing Chapter, 'Our Adversaries, says he, who have prodded down thy Sanctuary, have no such title to thy favour as we have; for we are thine; but thou never barest rule over them; they were never called by thy name.' And God himself professes to treat his offending People with the tenderness of a Father: *Isaiah xlvii. 16. I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the Spirit should fail before me, and the Soul which I have made.* And by *Moses* he saith, *Deut. xxxii. 38. The Lord shall judge his People, and repent himself for his Servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.* The Psalmist also celebrates God for this, that, when his People had grieved him with many provocations, and merited the severest punishments, yet he was so merciful, that he forgave their mis-deeds, and destroyed them not. Yea many a time he turned away his anger, and would

would not suffer his whole displeasure to arise. For he considered that they were but flesh, and that they were even as a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again, *Psal. lxxviii. 38.* Much like what *Isaiah* says in the Chapter here before us: *We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away.*

Lastly, THE Prophet closes his Supplication to God, with pointing out his *Sion* in ruins, and *Jerusalem* lying in the dust. Which was a very moving Spectacle: For this place God had chosen for his own peculiar Habitation and Tabernacle among Men, *Psal. cxxxii.* Of this he had said, *Here is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein. I will abundantly bless her provisions, and satisfy her poor with bread. I will clothe her Priests with Salvation, and her Saints shall rejoice and sing.* And in other places it is said, 'The hill of *Sion* is a fair place, the joy of the whole earth. God is well known in her palaces as a sure refuge. Walk about *Sion*, go round about her, tell the Towers thereof. Mark well her Bulwarks, set up her houses, that ye may tell them that come after. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he shall be our Guide unto death.'

THIS place being the great Theme of their Praise and Admiration, while it was in a flourishing condition, was the chief subject of their Lamentations when destroyed. And it was their most ardent prayer to God, that he would be favourable and gracious unto *Sion*, and build up the walls of *Jerusalem*. *Thou shalt arise, say they, Psal. cii. and have mercy upon Sion, for it is time that thou have mercy upon her, yea the time is come. And why? thy Servants think upon her stones, and it pitieth them to see her in the dust.*

Fifth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 77

THIS their zeal was very acceptable to God; for it was in effect to profess, that the strongest reason they had to desire a restoration, was this, that they might see his Temple and Altar restored, and there worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. This was a very proper Argument to move him to hasten so good a work.

AND thus I have gone through the several parts of this Prayer, which I suppose *Isaiab* made for the use of his countrymen, when they should be Captives in *Babylon*, that they might beseech God to turn away from the fierceness of his anger, and to favour them again with the enjoyment of their religious and civil Liberties.

BUT before I conclude, I must observe that *St. Jerom* and several other learned Men understood the words of my Text to be a Prayer for the manifestation of the Messiah; which is indeed highly probable. For I believe that *Isaiab* did not know in what age or period of time he would appear amongst Men. And therefore he might justly wish for his Appearance at a time when his Church and People stood in so much need of a Saviour. However, the Prophet certainly had very bright and full revelations of the Person of the Messiah; and knowing that he should come down from Heaven, and be *Immanuel, God with us*, he might well solicit him by this Prayer to descend and manifest himself upon this occasion.

TO him every part of this Prayer would, upon examination, be found very applicable. I shall only point out that Text at ver. 4. which *St. Paul* applies to the times of the Messiah, 1 Cor. ii. 9. *As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of Man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God, says the Apostle, hath revealed them to us by his Spirit.* So that the Church knew
nothing

nothing of those things in the days of *Isaiah*, which have been made known to us since the coming of Christ. By whom this Scripture is already verified in part; but will be more perfectly fulfilled at his second appearing, when he shall bow the Heavens and come down in the glory of his Father, with the Holy Angels, to judge the quick and the dead, and shall raise his Servants out of the corrupt dust of the earth, and give them bodies which shall shine like his own glorious body, and shall cause them to ascend with him into those immortal Joys and Pleasures, which we have not at present thoughts to conceive, nor tongues to express; where he now liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.



SERMON



SERMON VII.

On the Sixth Sunday after EPIPHANY.



ISAIAH lxvi. 1, 2.

Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my word.

IN my discourse upon Chap. lxiv. I observed that *Isaiah*, by an anticipation of time common in the prophetick writings, speaks of the Temple as being burnt with fire, and lying in ruinous heaps. Now here in my Text he introduces God as transacting with his People about the rebuilding of it. Upon which occasion he admonishes them to be careful in purifying the temple of their hearts, that so they might be qualified to come before him, and

80 S E R M O N VII. *On the*

and might offer him an acceptable sacrifice of Prayers, Praises and Thanksgivings. For as for an earthly house, and flesh of beasts, he wanted them not, but had appointed them as means of Communion between himself and a holy obedient People. *Heaven, says he, is my throne, and earth is my footstool;* 'They are all the work of my hands; they subsist by my power, are governed by my providence, and are evermore subject to my will and disposal. What then can any house which ye shall build to me, add to my dominion or grandeur? Ye can have the materials which shall raise it and adorn it, nowhere but out of the earth, which is mine already. And when it is finished, the bulk of it will be nothing in comparison of the globe of the Earth, nor the ornaments of it comparable to the glories of Heaven.'

GOD does not say this to discourage his People from restoring their Temple and the Services of it, but only to let them know that these external performances would avail them nothing, if they did not purifie their hearts and mend their manners. What was it that caused *Solomon's* Temple to be consumed by the flames, but the flagrant sins and provocations of their fore-fathers? Which if their posterity were resolved to imitate, they might as well let their Temple lye buried in the dust; it could not be a means to them, continuing to be such, of any beneficial communion with a holy God.

BUT if they were truly sensible of their duty to the Divine Majesty, and resolved to perform what he required of them: if they would offer up their prayers, and confess their sins with a meek and contrite heart; if they would hear his word with that reverence and godly attention which argued their desire to understand it and be doers of it, then
their

Sixth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 38

their zeal in erecting a spacious and beautiful Temple, wherein they might come together to unite hearts and voices in glorifying God, and mutually to encourage and comfort one another, would be so far from being imputed as a fault to them, that it would redound to their high commendation.

THIS we are very sure, is the substance of what *Isaiah* would say to his people upon this occasion. We must not imagine that he had any design, by the words of my Text, to dissuade them from making convenient and decent provisions for the outward exercise of Divine Worship; for in so doing he would not have been consistent with the revealed will of God throughout his word.

LET any Man peruse the directions which God gave to *Moses* for making the Tabernacle, which was a portable Church, as we may call it, for the use of the people in the wilderness. Let him consider what vast variety of costly work there was about it; how liberally the people contributed towards the making of it; how God assisted the heads and hands of the artificers *Bezaleel* and *Aholiab*, that they might be able to do every thing in the most elegant manner; and what care was taken, by curtains and covers, to preserve the beauty of it: He that considers these things, must be very perverse indeed, if he will not confess that God is well pleased with decency in his Church, and with the liberality and care of his people to that purpose.

AND he will be yet more convinced of this, when he comes to the history of the building of *Solomon's Temple*. Which that it might excel all other buildings in splendor, magnificence, and sumptuous furniture, was a work reserved for the reign of the wisest King, and for the most peaceable, rich, and

84 SERMON VII. On the

flourishing state of the Kingdom of *Israel*. And yet who can doubt but the King behaved himself with an humility most acceptable to God, when in his prayer at the dedication of it, *1 Kings viii. 27.* he said; *Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the Heaven and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have built?* Intimating by these words his acknowledgment, not only that it was too little to comprehend the infinite Greatness, but likewise too mean to entertain the infinite Majesty of God.

THE defiling of this Temple was one of the gross and crying Sins of the *Jewish Nation*. And they did not only defile it by frequenting the Service of it under a load of habitual and unrepented Sins; but likewise by various other ways: As, first, by multiplying the sacrifices which they offered there a great deal beyond what the Law required, or what could consist with the veneration due to such a sacred place. This God reproves them for by our Prophet, Chap. i. saying, *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and of the fat of fed beasts. Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me, &c.* Which reproof I take to be grounded upon an Excess which this people committed in the matter of sacrifices, partly out of an opinion, that sacrificing was the greatest duty of their Law, and that to abound in it would compensate for the breach of all other duties; but many times out of mere luxury and wantonness. I believe that many of their voluntary Sacrifices at the Temple were no better than common Feasts in ordinary houses: and that upon such occasions they were guilty of excess in eating and drinking, and of various profanations consequent thereupon. Insomuch that it was customary for the vilest of Sinners to go

Sixth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 83

up to the Temple and sacrifice in a very irreverent manner. Of which exorbitance I understand those words immediately following my Text, *He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man, &c.* So the words run in our English version, making the sense to be as if God hated all sacrificing as much as the things here compared with it; which is impossible. But the words, *as if*, are not in the original to make the comparison; I therefore read the verse without them, thus: *He that killeth an ox, would make no conscience of slaying a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, does it with no more devotion than if he were cutting off a dog's head; he that offereth an oblation, would even offer it of swines blood; he that burneth incense, would not scruple to burn it to an Idol.* This rendering of the words I take to come nearest the original, and to be most consistent with the mind of the Prophet in reproving the abuse of sacrifices both here and in other places. And to such abuses I believe the Prophet *Jeremiah* had an eye, Chap. vii. when he says that God gave no command to his people concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices, in the day that he brought them out of *Egypt*: I suppose he means it of such luxurious feasting and revels as I have been speaking of.

2dly, It appears from several passages of holy writ, that the Priests and Levites, who had the care and custody of the Temple, suffered the buildings to run to decay, and the rooms to contract filth, and the vessels to be embezzell'd, and the offerings to be perverted. They performed their services in a careless, contemptuous manner: they offered polluted bread, coarse, stale, ill tasted, upon the Altar. They did not inspect the creatures brought for sacrifice, according as the Law directed, to see if they were free from all defect and blemish; but they often admitted of such

84 S E R M O N VII. On the

as were blind, lame, maimed, diseased, whereby they profaned holy things, and polluted the Table and Altar of the Lord, and caused men to despise and loath the offerings, as God complains by the Prophet *Malachi*.

3dly, THE Jews profaned their Temple with the superstitions and idolatries of the heathen. King *Abaz* brought in an Altar from *Damascus* of a fashion different from that which God had ordained, 2 *Kings* xvi. *Manasseh* built Altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord: and likewise erected a graven image in the same house, 2 *Kings* xxi. These idolatries were attended with abominable lewdness, 2 *Kings* xxiii. 7. *Seest thou not*, says God to *Jeremiah*, Chap. vii. *what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other Gods, that they may provoke me to anger; and they have set up their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.* *Ezekiel* also writes, Chap. viii. how he was carried by the Spirit of God from the place of his captivity in *Chaldea* to *Jerusalem*, where he had a vision of the abominable superstitions which were practised in and about the Temple. In one place he saw chambers whose walls were painted with the images of beasts and creeping things, which the people had idolized. In another, saw women weeping for *Tammuz*, a pagan Deity. The *Greeks* have explained this by the lamentation of *Venus* for her beloved *Adonis*, who was slain by a wild boar in hunting. So *St. Jerom* upon this place. In a third place, between the porch of the Temple and the Altar, he saw about twenty five Men, with their backs towards the Temple of the Lord, and their faces towards the east, worshipping the Sun.

SUCH

Sixth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 85

SUCH were the *Jews* profanations of the Church of their God at *Jerusalem*, which inflamed his anger against them, and caused him to stop his ears at their prayers, and to hide his face from them, when they sought him. But of such Kings as reformed these abuses, purged his house from idolatry and all uncleanness, repaired the breaches, restored the ornaments and vessels, and renewed his service and worship in it; of such God has declared his highest approbation.

WE see then, that it is no indifferent thing, but a matter of great moment in God's esteem, that suitable provisions be made for his publick worship; that Churches be erected for that purpose, that they be kept in good repair, and decently furnished and adorned; that they be used with that reverence which is due to sacred things. But we shall see more of the divine pleasure concerning this, if we look forward to the Book of *Haggai*, who prophesied at the building of the second Temple. It seems that work had been neglected for about seventeen years from the time that the foundation had been laid according to the Decree of King *Cyrus*; and we are told that the *Jews* alledged in excuse of this delay, that they had not sufficient means to carry it on. Whereupon God sent the Prophet *Haggai* to reprove them for this neglect. *Is it time for you,* says he, *O ye that say, the time for building the Lord's house is not yet come: Is it time for you to dwell in your cieled houses, and to let this house lye waste?* You pretend to be so indigent that you cannot build it; but the splendor of your own houses testifies against you, that you want for nothing but a pious and willing heart to finish the house of God. And now, says he, consider I pray you, how God resents your contemptuous usage of him. Ye have sown much seed, but

G 3

have

‘ have brought in a small harvest: you eat and
 ‘ drink, but are not nourished with your food:
 ‘ you clothe your selves, but your garments will
 ‘ not keep you warm: you get money, but you
 ‘ put it into a bag with holes, it moulders and
 ‘ consumes you know not how. And whence is
 ‘ all this, saith the Lord, but because every one
 ‘ of you runs after the concerns of his own house,
 ‘ and suffers mine to lye in ruines. Go up there-
 ‘ fore now to the mountains, and bring wood,
 ‘ and build this house, and I will take pleasure in
 ‘ it, and dwell among you.’ And when this ad-
 monition had stirred them up to set about the
 work, ‘ Now observe, says he, this day is the
 ‘ twenty fourth day of the ninth month; from
 ‘ this day will I bless you in your corn and wine
 ‘ and oyl.’

CAN there be a more evident declaration than
 this, that God deals with Men according as they
 deal with him, and encreases their substance in
 proportion as they bestow it in the accommoda-
 tions of his publick worship? Indeed there is no-
 thing in the Old or New Testament that can be
 argued against the doctrine which I am asserting,
 but every thing serves to confirm it. For if any
 man should pretend authority from our blessed
 Lord for undervaluing the externals of religion
 in his Church, he must strangely overlook that
 most eminent act of his, when he purged the Tem-
 ple at *Jerusalem* out of an ardent zeal for the
 sanctity of it, as it was his Father’s house. And
 whereas he told the woman of *Samarita*, that in
 the times of the Messiah men should worship God
 in spirit and in truth, it was always their duty so
 to worship him, and they were called upon to do
 it under the Law as well as under the Gos-
 pel. For a proof of which I need go no farther
 than the latter part of the words of my Text.
 And

Sixth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 87

And yet we have heard how much God required the external accommodations of his worship under the Law; and the Prophets foretold that there would be as much and more outward splendor of religion in our Christian Dispensation. *For from the rising of the Sun, says God by the Prophet Malachi, Chap. i. unto its going down, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the Heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts.* Now let us take the Incense here mentioned in as spiritual a sense as we please, yet we must not so spiritualize the whole prediction as to say, either that a private devotion between God and our selves, transacted within the walls of our own houses, is the way to make his name great and glorious, or that a sordid face of religion is as rational a way to do it, as a splendid one. Common sense will tell us that we cannot render publick honour to God or the King, but in a publick way, and that we cannot make profession of it, but in such assemblies and with such accommodations as are fit for the occasion.

As to the words of my Text, they are so far from being an argument against the splendor of religion, that in my apprehension they conclude very strongly for it. For when God says, *Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool*, it is very natural to infer, that no house built with human hands can be worthy of him. And it follows farther, not that we should offer him none, or that which is but mean; but that we should provide the best we can for him, and acknowledge it to be infinite condescension in his Majesty, that he will accept of it. This we learn from his own word, to be agreeable to his will.

His condescension is so great, that he never despises nor abhors the lowest estate of mankind. He accepts of the mire, the cup of cold water, and the cave or the cottage for the assemblies of his Saints, when their circumstances will afford no better. But *Haggai's* argument beforementioned carries undeniable reason in it; that for men to suffer the house of God to look sordid and ruinous, while their own habitations shine about it, is a disrespect which may justly provoke him to withdraw his Presence from them.

HE withdrew from the *Jews* on the account of such disrespects. For though they made an ostentation of honouring God, and affected to be thought precise in the observance of his Law, this was but a strain of hypocrisie, as we learn from all the ancient histories of them, which are crowded with complaints, how they robbed God in tythes and offerings, how they presented lame, blind, maimed, diseased animals to be sacrificed on his Altar; how they filled their first Temple, one while with rubbish, another while with idols; how backward they were to build the second, and how by keeping an exchange in it, they turned it into a den of thieves: how they broke in upon their Sabbaths and days set apart for the publick exercise of religion, by doing whatever they saw fit upon them; and how they dishonoured God by customary swearing and cursing. He that is satisfied that the *Jews* were guilty of these open contempts and violations of their Law, (and he must be satisfied, unless he will reject the best history) must agree with me, that these were enough to provoke the Divine Majesty to depart from them.

TRUE it is, they are often called upon to purifie their hearts, and to serve God with an humble, contrite spirit, which is preferred before ma-
terial

Sixth Sunday after EPIPHANY. 89

terial Sacrifices. As to Sacrifices, I have spoke largely of them already; and as to all other rational circumstances and modes of Worship, I shall now say of them in general, that they are so far from hindering the true devotion of the mind, that they much rather help to raise and improve it. I would fain know which of the two is in reason to be esteemed the more humble Worshipper: He who kneels at his Prayers to God, or being hindered from that posture, stands up and prays with Reverence and Attention; or he who acts the Spectator only, and behaves as if he were unconcerned? And surely the first of these, in shewing his Zeal for the comeliness of God's house, and readily doing all that he can to support it, testifies a worthier sense of the divine Majesty, and a greater concern that he should be glorified on earth, than the other who is backward or indifferent in these things.

WHEN *Samuel* told *Saul*, that *obedience was better than sacrifice*, he plainly meant it of such Sacrifice as *Saul* had brought from the *Amalekites*, contrary to God's expresse Command: but never intended that his saying should be construed to the disparagement of such Sacrifices as were ordained by the Law; for the with-holding of such was in it self an act of disobedience.

LET us not seek to evade any Duty by the mis-application of such Scriptures; for no obligation to a good work can ever be weakened by them. God requires us to love him above all things, and to seek his Kingdom and the Glories of it in the first place; which implies no less than that we should be ready to serve him with all our faculties of mind, body, and estate. He hath graciously promised by this Prophet to reward such Service with a new Heaven and a new Earth: and certainly nothing can hasten that blessed Renovation

SERMON VII.

tion of things so effectually, as the Assemblies of men worshipping God in the beauty of Holiness.

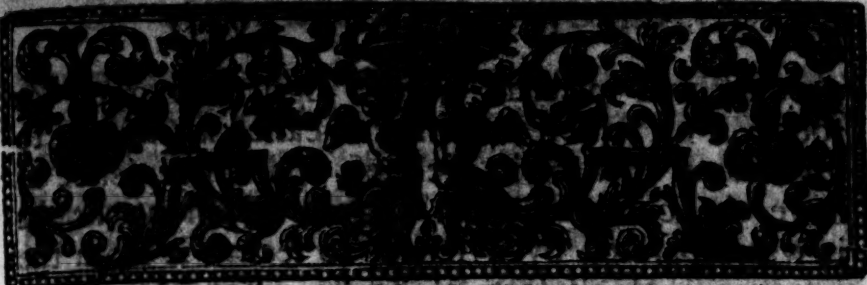
IN such a uniform Worship as this, how gloriously would the Light of the Gospel shine? It would soon bring us to that time which is promised in this lxvith chapter, when *Sion* shall bring forth a Nation in one day; when she shall bring forth before she falls in travel, and be delivered before her Pangs come upon her. It would accomplish the much-wished-for Conversion of the *Jews*, and bring in the Fulness of the *Gentiles*; and extend Peace as a mighty river, and Joy and Gladness over all the earth.

TO this end, let us put away those delusions which are here laid to the charge of *Israel*, and which *St. James* speaks of, that they were Hearers of God's word, but not Doers of it; that when he called, they would not answer, and when he commanded, they would not obey; but did evil before his face, and chose those ways in which he delighted not.

LET us endeavour to answer the end of our Communion with God in this place, which is the principal point aimed at in my Text, and 'tis this, that we be endued with an humble, contrite Heart, and bring forth the fruits of it in a godly, virtuous Conversation: then shall we find God a very present help in all our necessities; then will he answer, as he promises, even before we call, and while we are yet speaking, he will grant our Requests, thro' the Merits of *Jesus Christ* our Lord,



SERMON



SERMON VIII.

On SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday.



GENESIS ii. 15, 16, 17.

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

MOSE S, in his account of the Original of Mankind, assures us, that God formed the human body out of the dust of the Earth, and that he ordained such fruits of the Earth as were proper to support and maintain this earthly body. And tho' we may suppose that such fruits were quickly produced in some measure all over the face of the Earth; yet the wise and good God was pleased to accommodate our first Parents with a select spot of ground, which excelled all others in trees whose product

product was pleasant to the sight and good for food. For which reason it is called a *Garden*, to give us an Idea of its richness and convenience above the common field. From which no doubt it was separated by a fence, to secure it from the annoyance of all sorts of beasts. For Man being constituted their sovereign Lord and King, it was very fit that he should be raised above them in the goodness of his habitation, as much at least as the Princes of the present World are above the meanest of their People. And surely this Garden had as good accommodations for lodging, walking, and all the Entertainments and Pleasures of life, as any thing that was ever possible to be made by the hands, or contrived and invented by the wit of man.

As to the Situation of this Garden, 'tis here described to have been in the east part of a Province which was afterwards called *Eden*; and it is farther denoted by a River which ran thro' it, and afterwards divided itself into four Streams, whose ancient names were *Pison*, *Gihon*, *Hiddekel*, and *Perath*: The two latter are well known by the names of *Tigris* and *Euphrates*, and they encompass that large Country in the East called thence *Mesopotamia*. And learned Geographers observe that *Gihon* was by the *Persians* named *Araxes*, and falls in with the River *Euphrates*, as *Pison* does with *Tigris*, which, from their conjunction, is called *Pistigris*.

WE cannot indeed undertake to point out the particular spot of ground we are speaking of: whether it was in the Isle of *Eden* lying in the *Tigris*, about ten miles in circuit; or whether it lay nearer *Ninive*, or *Babylon*, as some have imagined, cannot be ascertained by any remains of it. I need not observe, that it naturally fell to decay, when our first Parents, for whom it was planted, and by whom

On SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday. 21

whom it was cultivated, were turned out of it: As it is well known that at this day all earthly Habitations quickly grow ruinous, when they are destitute of Inhabitants: And by this means this Plantation might well be turned into a Wilderness in less time than the age of man, especially of the first men. But if it lasted as long as the old World, yet the universal Flood, which mangled and corrupted the whole surface of the Earth, must needs deface this happy tract of ground, and abolish all signs and tokens of its primitive Felicity.

AND therefore we cannot sufficiently wonder at the Perverseness of those men, who because we cannot shew them the very Ground where this Garden stood, deny the reality of it, and will not allow the words which here describe it, to have any literal meaning, but only a figurative, allegorical sense. That there are Types and Sacraments contained in the account of this Garden, and the Trees of it, we readily agree; and so there are in many other historical passages of the old Testament. But that they have no literal meaning will be asserted by none but sceptical abusive Wits, who have no reverence for the sacred Text. To such *Epiphanius* says well: ' If there were no such thing as a real earthly Paradise, then all that follows was allegorical; there was no such thing as a Fountain or River to water it: and if no River, then no such heads or branches as *Pison, Gihon, Tigris* and *Euphrates*: no real Trees, Fruits, or Leaves. *Eve* did not really eat, nor was *Adam* a true Man, but all ingenious Fiction and Fable.' And to the same effect speaks *St. Jerom* in his Comment on *Daniel*, ' Let us hear no more of their extravagant Fancies, who finding nothing but Types and Shadows in sacred Writ, labour to subvert the Truth it self, and would leave us no real Paradise, Rivers, or Trees, but turn all into allegory. Now

: Now this pleasant Garden God prepared for man after he had created him; for by the Text it appears, that he had his beginning in some other place, and afterwards was brought hither. And tho' the soil of this Garden was extremely fertile, yet man was not to live an idle life in it, but to dress it and prune it. Whence their mistake appears, who would have great part of our primitive happiness to consist in a freedom from labour. I confess indeed, that it was part of the Curse which God passed upon man after his Fall, that he should earn his bread with the sweat of his brows. But this I take to intimate, not so much that bodily Labour was a Curse entailed upon Mankind (for many we see live without it) as the great change which was now made in the Earth: and that whereas before this, it produced all the Necessaries of Life of its own accord, and gave Mankind no more trouble than what was requisite for ordering his diet, and keeping himself clean; henceforth it should not yield him his food, without tilling and digging, and planting and sowing; and that after all his Care and Pains, he should often find his ground encumbered with barren trees and hurtful weeds, which would make no small addition to his trouble. But that some bodily Exercise and Pains in ordering the affairs of Life, was always intended for us, even in our highest state of felicity, may, I think, be fairly concluded from the words of my Text.

AMONG the Trees of this Garden, there were two of special note; *one the Tree of Life, the other of the knowledge of Good and Evil*: The reality of both which are denied by the Allegorists: but we have done with them; and proceed to observe that the *Hebrews* call the former *the Tree of Lives*, because, as they say, the Fruit of it had a property to preserve the vegetative, sensitive, and rational

Life

On SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday. 99

Life of Man. Other Trees served to nourish the body, and so to preserve the animal life, and to this end they were given for man's ordinary food; but this Tree, being once tasted of, had a virtue which would immortalize the Eater; this appears from what God said and did after the Fall; Lest man should eat of the Tree of Life and live for ever, he cast him out of the Garden, and stopp'd up the passage, so as he never might have any future access to it. Manifest therefore it is, that this was a true material tree, as much as any others that grew about it, and that by God's Gift and special Grace it was endued with a faculty to make man live for ever.

CONCERNING God's Power to do this we cannot reasonably make the least doubt, since he who gives to our ordinary food virtue to nourish and preserve this natural Life many years, could by his almighty Power, if he saw fit, impart the like virtue to all or any part of our diet, to keep us alive to all eternity. And to shew that in this Tree there was such a virtue, it is said, *Rom. v.* that by sin death entered into the world; so that, had not man sinned, he had not been subject to die at any time. If it be demanded, whether, in case man had not sinned, all his Posterity must have had recourse to this Tree for their immortality; and how it could have sufficed them all; or how all could have come to it from the remotest parts of the Earth? It may be answered, either that the first man's eating should have served for all the rest; or else that God would have caused other such Trees to have grown in convenient places all the World over, according as mankind should have been multiplied; it being as easie for him to have caused the Earth to bring forth many, as one.

As to the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, some indeed think, that the Fruit of this Tree

Tree had a power to sharpen the Wit, and that our first Parents being like little children for knowledge in their state of Innocence, by eating hereof they were enabled to reason like grown Persons; and that whereas before this they did all things by a natural impulse, like the rest of the Creation, now they acted according to their own Will, Choice and Judgment. But this is not agreeable to that notion which we justly entertain of the Perfection both of Man's Understanding and Will in his first Estate. And therefore the more general opinion is, that this Tree was so denominated from the moral effects and consequences which followed upon the eating of it; shewing to man that his welfare consisted in obeying God, and was turned into misery by his disobedience. Not that Man, in his State of Innocence, could be ignorant, that to disobey God's Command was the fearfulest evil, and the observance of it the greatest good that could betide him: But as men in perfect health do notwithstanding conceive sickness to be grievous; yet have no such pungent sense of the pains of it, as what they find by experience when they come to be sick; even so it fared with *Adam*, who was generally apprehensive of the danger of transgressing his Duty to God; but when he had actually transgressed, felt a horror in his mind, infinitely greater than what he had ever imagined. By the change which he found in his own Conscience, and in all things about him, he could now make an estimate of the Good which he had lost, and the Evil which he had incurred and brought upon himself and his Children. He now saw himself naked both in Body and Mind, having lost the divine Love and Favour, and forfeited that Happiness which now appeared to be no ways from himself, or from the Creatures about him, but the sole condition and reward of his Obedience.

Upon eating this Fruit he quickly perceived, that the Glory with which he had been invested, departed from him, and left him a poor, naked, defenceless Creature, sadly degraded from his former Excellency, and his beauty turned into deformity. Thus we see that this Tree was called the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil, not from any intrinsic Property in its fruit to make men wise, as the seducing Tempter had affirmed, but from the moral Event of tasting it, whereby *Adam* found what a grievous and bitter thing it was to depart from God.

GOD had threatened him, that whenever he should eat of this Tree, he should surely die. Nor will it excuse *Adam* to say, that he knew not what Death was, and therefore could not be sufficiently restrained by the threatening of it. For he knew that his Transgression would incur the highest displeasure of his Creator and Preserver; on whom he might conclude that he intirely depended both for his Being and Well-being, when he could not but know that he was the Work of his hands, and was daily provided for and supported by him. But the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God will perswade us to believe that he revealed the nature of his threatened Penalty to our first Parent, so as that he might fully apprehend the danger of offending. And I am inclined to think that he understood more of it, than most of his Posterity do at first hearing.

'Tis highly probable that God had revealed to him the state of the fallen Angels, and bid him take warning by them how he sinned against him. Now the Revelation of their miserable state might lead him to foresee what Punishment his own Sin would bring upon him: That as their Rebellion had provoked God to banish them from his Presence and heavenly Kingdom, so Man resembling them in

their Sin, must expect to resemble them in their Punishment too. And that whosoever was cast out of the Presence of God, was separated from the Fountain of Life, and immediately subjected to the dominion and pains of Death. Thus much, I say, man by his natural reasoning might find out. But I believe he was not left to his own meer reasoning about this: I doubt not but God had declared to him, in a very particular manner, that upon his eating of the forbidden fruit, he should be turned out of Paradise, and fall into such Miseries, Pains, and gradual Decays, as we now find in our mortal Nature. For this is the meaning of the threatening, *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*; as it appears from the event. Man did not actually give up the Ghost the same day that he sinned: but he was immediately banished from his Paradise into a World which was curst with Cares and Troubles for his sake, and presently felt the dominion of death in those bodily Infirmities which daily grew upon him, and in time brought him to his Grave.

AND thus much of the historical sense and meaning of my Text. Let us now see what good Uses we may hence raise to our selves, not excluding a figurative and spiritual Application, which we have already allowed to be couched under such Scriptures as these, and desire no more but that the narrative may be acknowledged for a true history of real matters of fact.

IF THEN, we see here the bountiful Goodness of our Maker to us his Creatures, in that he never intended we should be miserable, but most happy. For not content to leave our first Parents to the wide World, tho' they might have lived any where in it, according to the plenty of Fruits which it then generally yielded under the smiles and blessings of Heaven; he led them into a Garden

ON SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday. 99

den of his own peculiar planting, replenished with trees pleasant to the sight and good for food, above all other places in the Earth. This is our advantage of having God for our Lord and Master, the reward of his service is Life, the happiest of Life; whereas the wages of sin is certain Death. The Tempter promised our first Parents, that if they would eat of the forbidden fruit, they should be sure to be gainers by it; but woful experience soon convinced them, that he was a vile Impostor, and by his persuasions cheated them out of all their happiness. Let us observe it as long as we will, we shall ever find God the friend, and Satan the enemy of Mankind. In the way of true Religion are to be found the only valuable Riches, Honours, and Pleasures: which those that seek in the Devil's service, are sure to be filled with Poverty, Shame, and Sorrow in the end.

Why, We see how fair and equitable the condition was, upon which God exhibited his Benefits to Mankind. 'Eat freely, says he, of the Tree of Life, and of all the rest of the Fruits, one only excepted, which I reserve as a test and proof of your Obedience to me. In this I found my Covenant with you, and promise to continue you in the enjoyment of all the good things which you see, provided that you will but abstain from that one Tree, out of pure respect and reverence to my Injunction.' What more reasonable for God to injoin? what more easie for man to observe? If we who are offenders, were to be our own Judges, we must condemn our selves for offending in this point; and yet we offend daily in putting forth our hands to the forbidden fruit. In the circumstances we are now in, God has not withheld any thing from us, which is conducive to our real happiness. He has forbid us all irreligious and immoral Actions; and our own too fre-

quent and too dear-bought Experience assures us, that there is the best reason in the world for such Prohibitions: Because all such Actions never fail to carry their sting and their poison along with them. Examine your self upon any one of the Ten Commandments, and consider whether the Observance of it proves not sweet, and the Transgression bitter to you. God hath, by an eternal and unchangeable Law, annexed our Happiness to the observance of his Laws, and our Misery to the breach of them.

3dly, HERE is fair warning given us, to take notice of the Condition whereon our Happiness depends, that we may perform it. *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.* This is an argument that God delights not in the death of a Sinner, because he is so concerned to keep us back from the commission of those Sins, whose punishment is Death. But why has he so ordered it, that Death should be the certain consequent and product of Sin? I answer, This is not the work of God, for he never made Sin, he cannot be the Author or occasion of it. For all Sin is a transgression of the divine Law; and surely God never willed or decreed that his own Law should be broken, nor ever cast any thing in any Man's way, to lead him to the breach of it.

BUT why then did he forbid Man to eat of such a Tree, when he knew he would be most apt to pry into that which was concealed, and to venture upon that which was forbidden? All this may be very true, and yet no disparagement to the Goodness of God: for the curiosity to know secrets, and the coveting after forbidden things, are inordinate Desires which man should have checked and restrained; which when he refused to do, especially in so reasonable a case as this was, it shows that he was not duly sensible of God's sovereignty

On SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday. 101

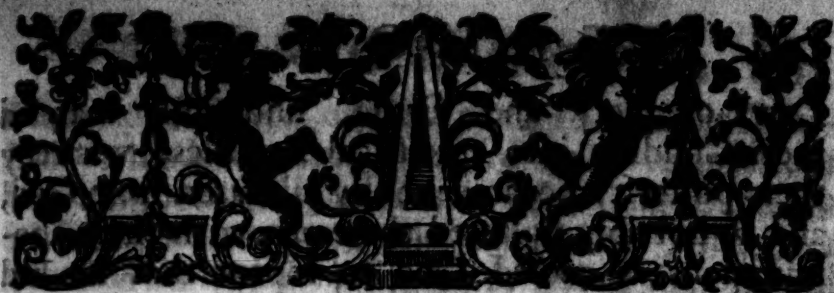
verignty over him; and his own infinite obligations to hearken to his Voice in all things. It betrayed the Pride and Stoutness of his heart, which refused to conform to the Will of God, and that he was more devoted to the gratification of an impertinent humour, than to the love and fear of his Maker. It discovered the small regard which he had to the present and future welfare of himself and his Posterity; and either an Infidelity in not believing the divine Threatning, or an audacious Presumption in venturing upon it, when so plainly denounced, and so easily avoided.

AND this may obviate the cavils of such perverse Disputers, as I noted before, who boldly arraign the wisdom and goodness of God for putting it in the power of man to damn himself and his Posterity, by eating a little fruit, as they love to express it: Whereas it was not the nature of the fruit, but the sinful rebellious affections of the Mind which accompanied the eating of it, that brought misery and death into the World. By eating this forbidden fruit, man renounced his Allegiance to God, and took part with his enemy the Tempter. And as to the assigning of this Tree for the test and tryal of his Obedience, it was very natural in the circumstances he was in; and those who take the freedom to censure it as a light matter, cannot find out any thing more obvious and proper for such a purpose. But while they make such a light matter of this Transgression, they plainly declare they would have committed it themselves, had they been in the place of our first Parents; and indeed they commit it every day, not only by their prophane Discourses about it, but by acting the like part, in doing their own will, when they know it is very contrary to the Will of God.

AND who, alas, is there among us, who is not prone, upon some occasions, to take these liberties; to think the bonds of religion and virtue too straight, to be willing to relax them according to the suggestions of his own or his companions corrupt reason, and finally to make his own lust the measure of his obedience!

LET us, upon such occasions as these, seriously lay to heart our unworthy treatment of the divine Laws: let us consider how little regard we care to pay to them, farther than as they may seem to comport with our present interests or affections. By this latitude which we assume in the government of our selves, we have lost an earthly Paradise and a Tree of Life. But behold, there is a new Covenant brought down from heaven, which entitles us to a higher Paradise and happier Immortality, where there shall be no more curse nor sickness nor death. Let us remember that the blessings of this Covenant, like those of the former, can belong to none but those who perform the conditions of it, which are plainly declared and set forth in it. And therefore, let us resolve so to fulfil them, with that impartiality, simplicity, and godly sincerity, that we may be found worthy to enter the Gates of this Paradise of God, and partake of the immortal fruits of it, through the Merits of him who hath purchased and prepared it for us, *Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.*





S E R M O N IX.

On SEXAGESIMA Sunday.



GENESIS VI. 1, 2, 3.

And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them: That the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

AFTER a brief account of the Generations of the old World, the sacred Historian proceeds to tell us how they were swept away by a Deluge of Waters: but first he assures us that they were immanent in a Deluge of Prophaneness and Immorality, into which they plunged themselves by lewd promiscuous marriages. For the better sort of them, who had for a good while lived by the

Laws of piety and virtue, unhappily married their Children into atheistical Families, whereby their posterity became wholly alienated from God, and so horribly polluted the earth with their abominations as caused God to repent that he had made it, and provoked him to pour out the vials of his wrath in the destruction of it.

THIS universal corruption of manners began with the multiplication of mankind. Which multiplication we are to date, not from the age of *Noah*, the last period of time which *Moses* mentioned, but many hundred years before: For of the ten Generations before the flood, making up together a sum 1656 years, half of them were fully sufficient to store all the World with Inhabitants; especially when the life of man was extended to such a length as it commonly was. So that we may say, men were multiplied upon the Earth 800 years at least before the general destruction.

IN this encrease of people, the accommodations of life, and ornaments of the body, were much studied and improved, and there was an emulation among the female Sex, who should appear to the greatest advantage both of natural and artificial beauty, and all the pleasing fashions of those times. In which the daughters of the most dissolute Families excelling, and making the most glaring figure, the sons of God fell in love with them, and married them.

WHO these sons of God were, has been much disputed. The LXX call them the Angels of God, and they are followed herein by *Josephus* the *Jewish* Historian, and his countryman *Philo*, and many of our ancient Christian Writers. Among whom the words of *Lactantius* may serve to shew their opinion: who, book 2. chap. 14. tells us, 'That when mankind began to encrease, God
' sent

sent down several of his Angels to be their Guardians, and to rescue them from the temptations and injuries of the Devil; charging them to take care not to defile themselves with any earthly corruption, for by so doing they should lose the dignity of their heavenly substance. This divine command the Guardians did not faithfully observe, but while they made their abode with men, the seducing spirit insinuated into their company, and by degrees ensnared them in the vitious love of women. For which transgression being shut out of heaven, they still wander up and down in the world, and are degenerated from Angels of God, to be the Ministers and instruments of Satan.

Thus far *Lactantius*: who if he had no other grounds for what he asserts, besides the Text here before us, has past a very unjust sentence upon the Angels of God. At present it is enough to observe, that Spirits could not be the Fathers of those Giants which were the offspring of these marriages: such an effect is absolutely impossible in the nature of the thing, and a sufficient argument to confute this opinion.

2dly, BY *the Sons of God*, some understand men of extraordinary bulk and stature, because things of uncommon bigness are sometimes so denominated in Holy Scripture, by a phrase peculiar to the *Hebrew* Tongue. Thus mountains and cedars are called the hills and the trees of God. But there is not the same reason, nor any example of it, that men should be called the sons of God from the largeness of their limbs.

3dly, OTHERS by *the Sons of God*, understand the Princes and Rulers of the Earth. And indeed the word here translated, *God*, is allowed to be meant sometimes of persons of high dignity and station. But then some word or circumstance usually

usually goes along with it to restrain it to such signification, which is not the case here before us. And therefore I proceed to a fourth opinion, more probable than any of the former, and espoused by the best writers: which is this:

ably, THAT by the Sons of God are meant the posterity of *Seth* and *Enos*: and by the Daughters of men, those of the lineage and family of *Cain*. This application is justified by the different characters of *Seth* and *Cain*. *Cain* murdered his brother *Abel* out of mere envy and aversion to his goodness, as the Scriptures of both Testaments assure us. And having done this, he remained impenitent; he departed from the presence of the Lord; he left the habitation of his parents, where the word of God was, because his guilty conscience could not endure it; and because his sacrifice was not at first accepted, he acted as other desperate sinners do at this day, he cast off the worship and service of God, and bred his children downright Atheists.

On the other hand, *Seth* was substituted in the room of his brother *Abel*, as his name intimates; to which his life corresponded: For he abode in the presence of the Lord, he lived in the fear of God, and, to say nothing of the piety of others descended from him, it is recorded *Gen. iv. 26.* that in the days of his son *Enos*, *Men began to call upon the name of the Lord*: or rather, as it is in the margin of our Bibles, *they began to call themselves by the name of the Lord*. They did not then first begin to pray and sacrifice to God; for *Adam* and *Abel* had done that before; neither did they then begin to swear by the name of God, as some have conjectured: But the plain meaning is this, that the men of the house of *Seth*, in the days of his son *Enos*, when they were now branching out into divers Families, took upon them the style

style and title of the *Sons of God*, to denote their constant adherence to his faith and worship, and to distinguish themselves from the children of *Cain*, whom they called the *Sons of mere Men*, as being a carnal and Atheistical generation. Now between these *Sons of God* and Daughters of Men were the marriages made, here spoken of in my Text. Those names of distinction were well known, and had been set upon them long before: and therefore *Moses* here mentions them by such names, without any farther explanation.

THE marriages between these Families of different principles were justly displeasing to God, as endangering the utter subversion of all true religion in the world; and very likely they were a violation of paternal injunctions. 'Tis highly probable that *Seth* and his son *Enos* had enjoined their posterity never to marry with any of *Cain's* children, as being a seed of evil-doers, with whom no blessing of God could ever be expected. There is a tradition, that the posterity of *Seth* lived in the hill-countries, feeding their cattle, and leading a plain, honest, severe life; while those of *Cain's* house inhabited the vales, where they built towns, exercised husbandry, lived in much luxury, and spent much of their time in publick feasting, musick and dancing, which entertainments by degrees drew the Shepherds down from their hills to joyn with them. It is not to be doubted but that the *Cainites* delighted in musick, since we read, Chap. iv. 21. that *Jabal*, one of their brethren, was the Inventor of it. In the same place we read of *Naamah* their sister, the daughter of *Lamech*, who had her name given her from her beauty; as *Adab* his wife, there spoken of, was so called from the exactness of her dress: which in some measure explains what is related in my Text concerning the fairness of these daughters of men.

THIS

THIS elegance of features and dress allured the sons of *Seth*, contrary to the sacred Law and custom of their Ancestors, to contract marriages with these daughters of *Cain*. In which they greatly sinned, that they surrendered their ancient piety and integrity to such a motive. For though beauty, when joyned with piety and virtue, is a grace, yet when 'tis separate from them, as it was in this case, it is only a temptation and a snare to alienate men from God.

As those marriages were criminal, so the issue of them was monstrous both in body and mind. There were Giants before in the breed of *Cain*; and such his daughters bare to the sons of *Seth* after they had married them. The name signifies men of a prodigious size; and as to their evil manners, they followed of course. Their superior strength above other men emboldened them to be proud, cruel, brutish, to rob, ravish, murder, to give an unbounded range to all their Lusts: In short, *they neither feared God nor regarded man.*

THE old Grecians and Romans give much the same character of Giants. They had heard that they not only trampled upon all the laws of men, but fought against heaven, and sought to dethrone the Gods. No doubt many of their traditions descended to them from the lives and actions of these Giants before the flood. This is certain, that the intolerable wickedness of these men was the most eminent cause of the destruction of that World. The Almighty was able to endure their provocations but a very little longer, as he affirms here, saying, *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*

OF which words there are various interpretations. The LXX and vulgar Latin read them to this sense: *My Spirit shall not always remain in*
man;

man; by the Spirit understanding the human Soul, which God breathed into man at the beginning, and which he was now about to take away by the flood. But our *English* version is more expressive of the original, and carries a stronger sense in it, thus, *My holy Spirit shall not always strive and contend with man*, 'to turn him from his evil ways, seeing he hath so constantly resisted it, hardening his heart both against my mercies and judgments, and turning a deaf ear both to my immediate voice from heaven, and to the messages which I have sent him by my Angels and Prophets.' This is agreeable to the foregoing accounts of God's dealings with these men, and to the remark which St. Peter makes, 1 Ep. iii. 20. that *in the days of Noah God waited upon disobedient Sinners with much long-suffering*, which is an eminent grace of his Holy Spirit. But this forbearance not leading them to repentance, he now declares that he will endure their manners but a little longer.

YET his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. This cannot well be meant of the age of man, as if that was now limited and determined to this number of years; for a great many, after the flood, exceeded this period of life, and many more never attained to it. But it is most consistent with God's discourse in this Chapter, to interpret these hundred and twenty years of that space of time which he allotted to the old World for their final tryal under the Ministry of Noah: From whom they should hear continual warnings of the approaching Deluge, and see him prepare an Ark for his own and his Family's preservation. And if the hearing and seeing of all this would not lead them to repentance, then, after the expiration of that time, nothing remained but utter destruction. After an hundred and twenty years from the time this was spoken, the World was drowned.

I know it is said at the close of the fifth Chap. that *Noah* was five hundred years old; and afterwards, Chap. vii. that he was six hundred years old when the flood came; so that it should seem there passed but one hundred years from the time when this was spoken. But it is well observed by learned men, that *Moses*, in setting down *Noah's* age before the warning which God gave him of the flood, does not strictly adhere to the order of time in his Narrative: and that indeed he had notice of the flood when he was four hundred and eighty years old. The remark upon the birth of *Shem*, *Ham*, and *Japhet*, that they were all born when their Father was five hundred years old, comes in by an anticipation of time, in a proper place to make up the whole catalogue of the holy line before the flood, the history of which was a distinct thing, and therefore to be handled apart, and so no hindrance but that the hundred and twenty years spoken of in my Text, was the time of express and positive warning which God gave by *Noah* of the approach of the Flood.

THE reason which God assigns why he will spare these men no longer than this space of time, is this, *because man is flesh*. This is not spoken with respect to the humanbody, which cannot be provoking to God as such, because he made it so: but it must be taken in a moral sense, and is as much as to say, 'They are all carnal wretches, wholly addicted to sensual pleasures; their whole man is flesh, they have drowned the rational Soul in voluptuousness. Therefore they are unworthy that my Holy Spirit should strive with them any longer. They have nothing in them that is worth saving. Their defilements of the Earth call for a deluge of Waters to wash them away.' This makes a sense very coherent with my Text. First, the sons of God are de-
bauched

ON SEXAGESIMA Sunday. 111

bauched by prophane marriages, and then their offspring soon becomes nothing but a lump of mere impurity.

THIS sends us back to look into the Moral of this history, and to see what fruit every branch of it will afford us.

And 1st, AT the same time that we hear of the multiplication of mankind, we hear of the increase and overflowing of Sin in the World. So apt are sinners to infect one another with their beloved Lusts, that it is extremely difficult for the better sort to live among them, and not be corrupted by them. This leprosie of sinful Society has given occasion to many severe sayings and grave admonitions of wise men to take heed of it: and many hath it frightened out of the world, i. e. from the publick assemblies and affairs of it, into privacy and retirement. And yet if we should go to seek for piety and virtue in lonesome cottages and small villages, we shall too often be disappointed. The most that can be said for them is, that they have not so many temptations and opportunities of sinning, so much luxury and fuel for their lusts, so many pomps and vanities, as are to be found in great cities.

2^{dly}, THE sons of God were not proof against the love of profane women, when once they took pleasure in seeing them, and were warmed with the allurements of their beauty. Thus their gazing betrayed them into sin, as it did the Mother of mankind; she saw that the forbidden fruit was pleasant to the eyes, and much to be desired; and this frequent looking on it and longing after it, prevailed with her at last to break through the divine Command, and take and eat of it. This is the method of address which the Tempter uses; to insinuate carnal lust into the heart, he begins with the eyes. For which reason those who would preserve

preserve their virtue, have made a covenant with their eyes, as *Job* speaks, that they would not look upon such temptations. *David*, who had fallen by indulging himself this way, afterwards prays that God would turn away his eyes from beholding vanity. And our blessed Saviour has taught this, as a fundamental doctrine of inward purity.

3dly, THE issue of these ungodly marriages was a race of brutish children, who grew up to a height of impiety and cruelty above all that ever went before them. What other fruit could be expected from Fathers who had quitted their Laws and Religion for the love of strange women, to whom they tamely gave up the government of their families and education of their children? What education could be given by mothers who had nothing but some external ornaments to recommend them: who from their own infancy were bred more to the gratification of their sensual appetites, than to any thing of useful employment, or sense of their duty to God or the World? Such matches have proved fatal to the best Families. The once most wise, most religious *Solomon*, was befooled by them in his advanced years, and led away from his own Temple to the high-places and altars of Idols. And to this sin of the Father were owing the weakness and misfortunes of his son *Rehoboam*. This he got by his presumptuous breach of that Law, which he must needs know, *Exod.* xxxiv. 16. where God forbids him to contract such affinities, for this very reason, because such wives would pervert him and his children from the true religion.

IT is observable in the histories of the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah*, that their Mothers names are commonly recorded, to the end that if the children were well educated, they might have the praise, if not, the shame and reproach of their education.

On SEXAGESIMA Sunday. 113

education? And we can hardly give a better reason how several good Kings came to have such bad sons, than this, that their Mothers gave them a wrong turn in their tender years.

THE Divine Law which was made to regulate marriages, and which I just now mentioned, is not abrogated, but still binding to us Christians, the matter of it being of that sort of religion, which is of an unchangeable nature. St. Paul allows Christians to marry only in the Lord, i. e. with their fellow-christians of the true faith, and expressly forbids them *to be unequally yoked with unbelievers*, as well knowing that the bad would rather corrupt the good, than the good reform the bad. The truth of which we see every day, and know by our own observation how much the ancient discipline of many Families is relaxed, the religion abolished, the virtue depraved, by the introduction of the daughters of such men as are here complain'd of in my Text.

4thly, WHEN men abandon themselves to the love of the World, and the satisfying of their sensual appetites, God withdraws the means of his Grace from them, and that very justly, for they would still continue to abuse them. *My Spirit*, says he, *shall not always strive with man*. And yet he allows them an hundred and twenty years after this, to try if they would consider and repent. Wherefore did he so, when he knew that after all they would remain impenitent? Why this was to magnifie his mercy and long-suffering, and likewise to let Sinners know that his happiness does not depend upon their manners. God, the righteous judge, says the Psalmist, is strong and patient. And we see examples of this every day. We see many men live long upon Earth, who shew all the signs of reprobate impenitent wretches, and to all their other provocations they add a plain

contempt of God's word, and defiance of his Law. This astonishes us, who think it were just that such men should be cut off with a swift destruction. That they go so long unpunished, is many times the fault of human magistrates, who neglect the office to which God has appointed them, of maintaining religion and virtue. At their slowness we should wonder, rather than at God's; for he himself is represented by *Isaiah* as wondering at them, Chap. lix. 14. *Judgment is turned away backward, Justice standeth afar off: Truth is fallen in the streets, Equity cannot enter. And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no Judgment, and he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no Intercessor, i. e. none of his vicerents whom he had intrusted with the sword of Justice, to draw it in his cause. Then he girt his arms of vengeance about him, and repaid them according to their deeds; fury to his adversaries, and recompence to his enemies.* — So that there are two reasons of God's long-suffering towards Sinners; one is, to give them sufficient warning and space for repentance; the other is, to see if those men who are ministers of Justice, have any zeal for his glory, and will plead his cause. If they desert his service, and take part with his Enemies, then he takes the cause into his own hands, and acts the righteous Judge.

He will not suffer his Spirit always to strive with sinful men. This striving is both in the outward call of the Prophets and Ministers of God's word, and in the inward motions of the Spirit and convictions of Conscience. Now it is certain that the Spirit may be quenched, and Conscience laid asleep, in many that live under the ordinary means of Grace. They will either wholly neglect such means, and make a jest of them, or attend them with such hard hearts as to take no impressions

ON SEXAGESIMA Sunday. 115

pressions from them, nor be led to repentance by them. This we see every day with our own eyes, and it is what the Prophets and Ministers of God have complained of in all ages. Our blessed Saviour notes it of these very people in my Text, *Matt. xxiv. 38, 39. that they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage all the time that Noah was preparing the Ark, and knew not, till the Flood came, and swept them all away. i. e. they were infidels, and regarded nothing that was said or done about it. Even so, says Christ, shall the coming of the Son of Man be.* It was so in the destruction of the Jews, whose doom he had foretold, but they regarded him not. It shall be so at his coming to judge this World, when there will be as little Faith on the Earth.

When all flesh have thus corrupted their ways, and live without God in the World, it then becomes dishonourable to him, it is a reproach to his Justice, to endure them any longer. For the sake of some few that confess and worship him, he spares the bulk of mankind. But when they universally deny him, 'tis then time to demonstrate his Power and Providence, by executing Judgments upon them.

This should move us all, seriously to consider how long the Spirit of God hath striven with us, and how little of the fruits of it appear in us: That after all the spiritual methods used for our Sanctification, we still remain that *flesh* here spoken of, are slaves to the temptations of the World, and the dominion of our own carnal Affections. Let us awake from this insensibility, and regard the Ark of God's own building, the Ark of his Church, and so frequent it, that when he comes to take vengeance on impenitent Sinners, we may be found in this Ark, in the number of his faithful and elect Children, whom he hath adopted in Christ our Head; To whom, &c.



SERMON X.

On QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday.



GENESIS xii. 1, 2, 3.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

BEING about to speak of that excellent man the Patriarch *Abraham*, I think it not amiss to begin with his general Character, as it is drawn by his own descendant *Josephus* the Jewish Historian, towards the beginning of his Antiquities. *Abraham*, says he, was a man of universal knowledge, a perswasive speaker, one that could discern between truth and error. Whereupon, being

ON QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday. 117

ing highly esteemed for his wisdom and virtue,
 he resolved to rectifie the mistaken notions of
 his countrymen concerning the Divine Nature.
 First therefore he ventured to teach openly, that
 there is but one God the Creator of all things:
 and that there is nothing, not the least part of
 the Creation which is beneficial to us, but it is
 made so by the special Ordinance of God, and
 not by any peculiar inbred Virtue which it hath
 of it self. These conclusions he drew from his
 observations of what passes in the Earth and the
 Sea; from the eclipses, changes, and variations
 of the Sun and Moon and other heavenly bodies.
 For, said he, if these things had a proper unde-
 rived power of their own, they would hold one
 constant Course and Order, from which nothing
 could move them. But it is evident from expe-
 rience that they want this constancy, and don't
 serve us of their own accord, but by the di-
 rection of a superior Power: to whom therefore
 it is meet that we render all honour and praise.
 For these Doctrines when the *Chaldeans* and *Me-
 sopotamians* were enraged against him, he thought
 in his best way, God being his guide and director,
 to leave them, and go into the land of *Canaan*,
 where, when he was arrived and settled, he built
 an Altar, and offered sacrifice to God.

THE *Chaldean* Historian, *Berosus*, has made
 mention of our father *Abraham*, tho' without
 naming his name, saying, In the tenth Age after
 the flood, there dwelt in *Chaldea* a great and ex-
 cellent man, singularly well skilled in the ce-
 lestial Science. *Hecateus* also, another Historian,
 hath written his life, not in a passage or two by
 the by, but in a whole volume. Likewise *Nico-
 las* of *Damascus*, in the fourth book of his Hi-
 story, speaks thus: In *Damascus* reigned *Abra-
 ham* a foreigner, who came thither with an army,

from a Country above *Babylon*, called *Chaldea*. And not long after he removed hence also with all his company, passing into a Country then called *Ganaan*, but now *Judea*, where he settled with his Descendants in great numbers, whose history I have written in another book. Thus far *Josephus*.

THE first time we find *Abraham's* name in sacred Writ, is *Gen. xi. 26.* where he stands in the Genealogy of *Shem* the son of *Noah*, being the tenth from him.

HIS Father *Terah* or *Thara* dwelt at *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, which word signifying fire, it is thought by some, that the perpetual sacred Fire which the *Chaldeans* deified, was kept in this City, in a Temple dedicated to it.

HERE *Abraham* was born: and concerning the time of his birth there are two opinions: Some place it in the year 292, others in the year 352 after the Flood.

THOSE who are of the first opinion, ground it upon *Gen. xi. 26.* where it is said that *Terah* lived seventy years, and begat *Abraham*, *Nabor*, and *Haran*. Those that are of the second, believe that *Abraham* was not born till the 130th year of his Father's age, which they collect from this computation. *Terah* died in *Haran*, aged 205 years, *Gen. xi. 32.* But he was dead before *Abraham* removed thence into *Ganaan*, as *St. Stephen* affirms, *Acts vii. 4.* *Abraham* was 75 years old at his removal, as in the verse next after my Text. Therefore he was born in the 130th year of his Father's age; for 130 added to 75 makes just 205, the age of *Terah* at his death. But if *Abraham* had been born in his Father's 70th year, then he must have been 135 at his Father's death, which is contrary to what is said here.

BUT

But what say those of this opinion to the fore-
cited Text, which affirms, that *Terah* being 70 years
old begat *Abraham*, *Nabor*, and *Haran*? Why,
they allow that *Terah* began to have children at
that age; but then they say that *Haran*, not *A-*
brahim, was his first-born. And truly it must
be so, if *Sarah*, *Abraham's* wife, was his brother
Haran's daughter, as both *Jews* and *Christians* are
generally perswaded; for she was but 10 years youn-
ger than her husband. I confess *Abraham* expressly
says, she was the daughter of his father, but not of
his mother. But because such Marriages are thought
not to have been allowed of in those days, and be-
cause it was then usual to call Nieces Sisters, this
is generally interpreted that *Sarah* was a-kin to *A-*
brahim by the half-blood, i. e. that *Haran*, whose
daughter she was, was his brother by the father,
but not by the mother. If she had two names,
and was that *Israh* mentioned *Gen. xi. 29.* as most
think, then the matter is past dispute that she was
Haran's daughter. However, *Lot* was certainly his
son, and he is called an old man, *Gen. xix. 31.*
when *Abraham* was but 83, which was not old in
those days. So that if *Lot* was older, or but near
as old as his Uncle *Abraham*, then certainly his
father *Haran* was the elder brother.

As for *Abraham's* standing first in the list of
Terah's sons, 'this, says *St. Austin*, is not so much
'in respect to the order of their nativity, as of their
'future dignity, in which *Abraham* had the pre-
'ference. And for the same reason *Shem*, the head
'of their family, is named the first of *Noah's* sons;
'tho' *Japhet* was the elder brother, as 'tis said
'*Gen. x. 21.*' The same learned Father was in-
clined to think that *Abraham* was indeed the
youngest of *Terah's* sons; but for his eminent vir-
tues, says he, so much celebrated in sacred *Writ*,
he is named in the first place. So that the order

of place proves nothing who was first or last born. Neither did God confine his blessing to the elder, but often bestowed it on the younger; of which there are many more Instances in Scripture, which names first the children of Promise, and the eldest and first in the divine Favour.

THE time of *Abraham's* birth is proper to be known, that we may see how many years of acquaintance and conversation he had with his Family that lived in the old World, and came out of the Ark. If he was born in the year 292 after the Flood, he lived 58 years in the time of *Noah*; who died not till the year 350. and if he was born in the year 352, he lived 150 cotemporary with *Shem*, who died not till 502 years after the Flood. So that according to either of the dates of *Abraham's* Nativity, he had time and opportunity enough to hear from the mouth of his Ancestors all the great affairs and passages of the old World, and the manner of the Flood, and of the Restoration of Mankind, and the Covenant which God made with them after it. From which immediate, authentick accounts he was enabled to convey a true History of all these things down to his own Children, as we find them recorded by *Moses* in this same book of *Genesis*.

HAVING seen *Abraham's* Nativity, Birth-place and Family, let us now proceed to consider how he was called of God out of his native Country, into a strange Land. The original indeed, and many versions say, *the Lord spake to Abraham*, which might incline us to think, that this Call was first given upon the death of his Father, which is mentioned immediately before my Text. But our Translators have made *Moses* say in the preterpluperfect tense, *The Lord had said to Abraham*, intimating that this Call was before *Terah's* decease. And so indeed *St. Stephen* places it, even before they dwelt in *Haran*, *Acts* vii. 3.

On QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday. 121

IF we look back to *Gen. xi. 31.* we shall there find that *Terah* took *Abraham* his son, and *Lot* the son of *Haran* his son's son, and *Sarai* his daughter in law, and they went forth with them from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, to go into the land of *Canaan*, and they came to *Haran* and dwelt there. By this passage it seems as if it was purely owing to *Terah*, that his Family removed from among the *Chaldeans*. But because he is expressly said to have been a Worshipper of strange Gods, *Jos. xxiv. 2.* and because God is said to have spoken to *Abraham* and not to him, about this removal, it is not doubted but that *Abraham* was the first Proposer of it, and that he perswaded his Father and the rest of the Family to accompany him in it; only *Nabor* staid behind for some time; but afterwards he also removed to *Haran* and settled there, as appears in the progress of this History.

HARAN, or *Charran*, or *Carrba*, as the *Romans* wrote it, was a City in that part of the East which was afterwards called *Parthia*. It was well known to the *Romans* on the account of a great defeat and slaughter which the *Parthians* made of their Army, under the command of *Marcus Crassus*, killing about thirty thousand of their soldiers. It lay about 376 miles distance from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*; and was, I believe, so named by *Terah*, in honour of *Haran* his eldest son, whom he lost in *Chaldea*.

HERE the Family continued for some years, as we may collect from *Gen. xii. 5.* where it is said that when they removed, they took with them all the Souls which they had gotten in *Haran*; tho' this is spoken of them, I believe, not as Parents, but Masters, and is to be understood of the servants which they had purchased with money, during their abode in that place.

MANIFEST it is, that they never intended to make *Haran* the place of their final settlement.

For

For when they set out from *Ur*, it was in order to go to the land of *Canaan*: But *Terah* being old and feeble, and the way very long and difficult, they were obliged, on his account, to halt about the middle of their Journey, and rest there during the remainder of his Life; which when it was ended, they went forward till they had finished their intended Journey, as we learn from this xiith chapter.

NOW the Lord had said to *Abraham* at *Ur*, and possibly he might say it again at *Haran*, *Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land which I shall show thee*. Upon which words two or three questions will arise.

As Iſt, AFTER what manner God ſpoke to *Abraham*? It is ſuppoſed by a voice out of the *Shekinah*, or Glory which deſcended from Heaven, and ſhone out in a ſudden and ſurprizing brightneſs, when God was about to ſpeak to Men. This way of the divine Apperance is favoured by what *St. Stephen* ſays, *Acts vii. The God of glory, or the glorious majeſty of God, appeared to our father Abraham*. Thus he is thought to have converſed with our firſt Parents in *Paradiſe*, and thus he appeared to *Moſes* in the *Buſh* at mount *Sinai*.

II. WHY did God call *Abraham* to this Pilgrimage? The reaſons are various: That he might reſcue him from the Idolatry of the *Chaldeans*, wherein his own Family was bred: That he might ſhew him the Land which he had decreed to give for an Inheritance to his Poſterity: That he might give him the moſt and beſt opportunities for divine Viſions, Colloquies, and Contemplations; and that he might exhibit in him to all the World an illuſtrious example of faith and obedience.

III. HOW can it be ſaid that *Abraham* left his kindred and his father's houſe, when all of them, except

On QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday. 213

except his brother *Nasur*, accompanied Him in his Travels? Why it is not said that he left them, but was commanded to have done so, in case of their non-compliance with the divine Will. This Call was like that of Christ to his disciples; *who-soever forsaketh not all his relations to follow me, is not worthy of me.* We must break from the strictest embraces of the dearest friends, if they would detain us from the God of our Salvation: but if they will accompany us, the reason of forsaking them utterly ceaseth.

IV. WHEN God called *Abraham* to go into a land which he would shew him, it is doubtful whether at first setting out, he told him the particular name of the Country. Some think he did, because it is said in this and the foregoing chapter, that they set out to go into the land of *Canaan*. But this may be related historically, as what was then intended by God, and afterwards proved to be the Country to which he called *Abraham*, tho' he did not presently tell him the name of it. *St. Paul*, speaking of this very case, *Heb. xi. 8.* says, that *when Abraham was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, he obeyed, and set out not knowing whither he went.* But then we may be sure that God led him, either by some general direction, as that he should travel southward or westward, which seems to be hinted at ver. 9. of this chapter, where it is said, that *Abraham journeyed, going on still toward the south:* or else God vouchsafed him some particular token of his Presence going before him, as he did to his Posterity when they went out of *Egypt*; for it is not credible that he should be brought into this country by meer chance and at all adventures.

THE virtue of *Abraham's* Faith in God's promises, and obedience to his call, is justly celebrated with high commendations in sacred writ. For he
was

was at *Sichem*, as we presently read, *i. e.* at the distance of seven hundred and seventy six miles from *Ur* the place of his nativity, when God first told him, *This is the land which I will give to thy posterity*: So that he had endured a long fatigue and exercise of his patience before he saw this *land of promise*; and when he was in it, he had no city or settled habitation, nor any child or likelihood of having any to inherit after him. Yet being fully satisfied, that he was under the divine conduct and direction, he cheerfully submitted to God's will, and trusted him against all the objections of carnal reason and human wisdom, that he would make him a great nation, a most noble name, and a blessing to all the families of the earth. All this *Abraham* firmly believed, and God punctually fulfilled.

1st, As to the promise of multiplying *Abraham* into a great nation, the completion of it appears in the whole history of *Israel* and *Judah*; particularly from that muster of their military forces which *David* made 1 *Chron.* xxi, 5. when he found them to be above a million and a half: a prodigious number for so small a Country as *Canaan*. But if we could take in the whole body of that People, especially if we could make an estimate of their several generations, and add to the chosen seed the descendents of *Abraham* by *Hagar* and *Keturah*, what sort of arithmetick could be able to comprehend them? This shews that there is no hyperbole in that promise of God to *Abraham*, that *his seed should be as innumerable as the stars of heaven, and as the sand upon the sea-shore for multitude*.

2^{dly}, God blessed *Abraham* and his Posterity by greatly encreasing their substance. He gave them a Land flowing with milk and honey, he greatly multiplied their herds of cattle and flocks of sheep,
he

On QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday. 125

he enriched them with treasures of silver and gold, so that they were not constrained to borrow, but had enough and to spare to lend to many other people. He gave them stately houses and cities which they had not built, vineyards and oliveyards which they had not planted, with many other temporal benefits which they obtained at an easie rate, and enjoyed in as great fulness as their Soul desired.

3dly, GOD promises here to make *Abraham's* name great, and this he eminently fulfilled. The children of *Heth* acknowledged him for a mighty Prince among them. The most High was pleased to honour him with the style of *his friend*, and to call himself *the God of Abraham* in a peculiar manner. All his posterity ever paid the greatest reverence to his name and memory, accounting it the first and principal part of their dignity *that they were Abraham's children*. And many other nations of the world, Christians and *Turks* as well as *Jews*, however they differ from one another in matters of Religion, yet all agree to magnifie the name of *Abraham*, by making honourable mention of it, and calling many of their children by it.

4thly, THE fourth part of God's Promise to *Abraham* was, that he should be a Blessing, or that a usual form of blessing should be occasioned by his remarkable felicity: so that when men would wish well to their friends and children, they would pray to God to prosper them and be favourable to them as he had been to *Abraham*, that he would shew the same love to them, as he had shewn to him.

5thly, GOD engages to be a friend to *Abraham's* friends, and an enemy to his enemies. *I will*, says he, *bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee*. Now for any two parties to have the same friends and enemies, is the highest league of friend-

friendship that can be contracted. Thus God vindicated *Abraham* in the days of his Pilgrimage, suffering no man to wrong him, but reprovng even Kings for his sake: over some of which God gave him victory in battle, and when others detained his wife from him, God visited them with Judgments, which could not be removed, till they restored her. Whereupon one of them was convinced and frankly owned, that God was with *Abraham* in all that he did: for which reason he courted his friendship, and entered into a strict league with him. The like distinguishing protection did God vouchsafe to all his Posterity, so long as they kept his Covenant, and did that which was good in his sight. Infomuch that *Balaam* could say, *there was no enchantment against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel.* And God forced the tongue of that false prophet and enemy to pronounce this very sentence of my Text, *Blessed is he that bleisseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee.* Finally we read in the book of *Judith*, ch. v. that when *Olofernes* General of the *Assyrian* Army, being at war with the *Jews*, enquired wherein their strength consisted, one of his Captains who knew their history, assured him, by a brief recital of their fortune, that they had always prospered while they faithfully served their God. Now therefore, says he, *if there be any error in this people, and they sin against their God, let us consider that this shall be their ruin, and let us go up, and we shall overcome them. But if there be no iniquity in their nation, let my lord now pass by, lest their Lord defend them, and their God be for them, and we become a reproach before all the world.*

Lastly, THE Blessings of God to *Abraham* are concluded and crowned with this promise, *that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed.* This is not to be understood of his own person, which was

On QUINQUAGESIMA Sunday. 127

was confined to a small part of the earth, but of his Seed, as the words are interpreted *Gen. xxii. 18.* of the Messiah, to whom they are applied by *St. Paul, Gal. iii. 8.* and *St. Peter, Acts iii. 25.* who according to his human nature descended of the lineage and family of *Abraham*, and in whom all nations are blessed, because all are equally and without distinction admitted into his Church, adopted the children of God thro' him, and made heirs of his heavenly Kingdom. So that by means of this Seed, which is Christ, *Abraham* is become the father of all the faithful, who shall be justified and made the friends and favourites of God with him.

To conclude: Let not what has been said pass as a meer historical entertainment, without any farther use to be made of it: for it is one of the most instructive lessons in the whole book of God. The Travels of *Abraham* to an earthly Canaan are an excellent type and resemblance of our christian Journey to the Kingdom of Heaven. Did *Abraham* hearken to that particular Revelation and Voice of God which was heard by none but himself? How much more should we be alarmed by the divine Call which we have heard by the mouth of so many sons of *Abraham*, the Prophets and Apostles, and by that one most eminent of all his sons, the Saviour of the World, which we hear daily from those Ministers who are appointed to proclaim it, and inculcate it upon us. Did *Abraham* persuade his aged Father and his Family to accompany him in seeking an earthly inheritance? How much more solicitous should we be in counselling, exciting, and guiding all our relations and dependents in the ways of our Lord, now we are assured that the end of our Pilgrimage is the Kingdom of Heaven. Did *Abraham* readily depart from his native Country, and throw himself into

into the perils and hardships of a wandering life, in search of a country which he had never seen, nor heard of, otherwise than by divine revelation and promise? This is intended to animate us, and cheer us under all the adversities which attend our passage through the wilderness of this troublesome World, and it should make us despise the cavils of atheistical men, who dispute the certainty of the Kingdom of Heaven; and convince us that there is no force in their arguments, when they would dissuade us from quitting the things which are seen for things which are not seen. *For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* Finally, we have that Son of *Abraham*, who hath been given for a blessing to all the Families of the Earth, calling upon us and assuring us, that if we will follow him, and faithfully observe his guidance and directions, we shall at the end of our race sit down with *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*, in the glorious Kingdom which he hath prepared for all such faithful and obedient Servants, and where he liveth, &c.





SERMON XI.

On the First Sunday in LENT.



GENESIS xxii. 11, 12.

And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of Heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the Lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.

THESE words are a divine Call from heaven to *Abraham*, which came just time enough to prevent him from slaying his Son *Isaac*, who was lying upon the Altar, bound hand and foot, with the wood under him, and the fire ready to kindle it, and his Father was handling the knife in order to sacrifice him a Burnt-offering. But God, who had demanded this Sacrifice of him, was pleased to accept the will for the deed, and suddenly in-
Vol. III. K terposing

terposing with-hold the fatal stroke, and turned a tragical proposal into a joyful issue.

LET us take a view of this whole affair, and we shall find in it four things worthy our observation. We shall see,

I. How God commanded *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son.

II. THE reason of this command.

III. THE ready obedience which *Abraham* paid to it.

IV. THE strength of his Faith which animated him to this obedience.

I. THAT God commanded *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son, we read in the beginning of this Chapter. Take now, says he, thy Son, thy only Son *Isaac* whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of *Moriab*; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the Mountains which I will tell thee of. *Abraham* had been so much accustomed to communion with God, both in visible appearances and personal colloquies, such as are here represented, that he could not be mistaken in this case: In which, if ever, he would be sure to be warranted with a divine commission. For though a Prince of his authority, and independance upon any earthly sovereign, had undoubtedly the power of life and death in his own Family, as much as any Potentate can have at this day; yet no authority less than divine, could, even in the eye of the World, justify his taking the life of such a Son, who was such a special and miraculous gift of God, a Son of so many great and precious promises, a Son who by a sweet and tractable Spirit had rendered himself the joy and delight of his Parents, as is sufficiently intimated before. To save such a Son as this from death, such a righteous Father as *Abraham* would not fail to exert the utmost of his authority and power.

On the First Sunday in LENT. 131

AND therefore when we see *Abraham*, the wise, the pious, the merciful *Abraham*, bind his dearest Son, lay him on the Altar, and take up a knife with a resolution to sacrifice him, we must conclude that he was infallibly assured that the words before cited, which required him to do this, were the words of God. This he was assured of, before he went about it, and any one may be satisfied of it by the happy issue. For had he been imposed on by any false *Demon*, any deluding Spirit, he had never been stopt in the execution, no more than some of his degenerate posterity were by *Molech*, to whom they burnt their children in the valley of the Son of *Hinnom*. None but the true God, infinitely good and gracious, would have snatcht *Isaac* from the impending knife, and have restored him to the embraces of his longing Parents, and to all the blessed purposes for which he was sent into the World.

HOWEVER, if this God had insisted to the last, that he should be sacrificed, it had been all very just and right. For he hath the issues of life and death in his hands, and may and does take any of us out of the World at what age and by what death he sees fit, without doing us any wrong: for *whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord*. It is for his pleasure that we are and were created.

II. THE reasons why God commanded *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son *Isaac*, were various. The first was, to make proof of his love and fear of God. For we do not truly love and fear him, except we prefer him above all the enjoyments of this life, above Father and Mother, Brethren and Sisters, Wife and Children, yea, and our own life, if he require it of us. The second reason was, to make the utmost tryal of his faith and obedience; which God had tryed before in several instances;

In calling him from his settlement in his own country, to a wandering life: in forcing him by a famine to go and sojourn in *Egypt*: in suffering his wife to be taken from him twice, once by *Pharaoh*, and again by *Abimelech*: in commanding him to send away *Hagar* and *Ishmael* out of his Family, to seek their fortune; and requiring himself to be circumcised when he was an old man. These were all great tryals of *Abraham's* faith and obedience, which he approved by readily following God in them all, without the least hesitation or murmuring: and now he bravely crowned them all, by laying his entirely beloved Son *Isaac* upon the Altar with his own hands for a Burnt-offering: which was a greater tryal, and harder task to perform, than all the rest put together; and is so acknowledged by the Almighty, *ver. 12.* for now, says he, *I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.*

BUT here it may be demanded, Did not God know the sincerity of *Abraham's* religion before he made this experiment of it? I answer, He did; for he knows our very thoughts before we conceive them in our mind. But in this he speaks after the manner of men, who know their trees by the fruits, and their friends love by the demonstration of it in real facts.

BESIDES, there was a third reason why God tryed *Abraham* thus far, because he knew he would acquit himself so well, as to be worthy to stand for an example of perfect obedience to all Generations. This is the reason why his Life is so largely writ here in the Old Testament, and his Piety so celebrated in the New: That in him we may see how God requires of us an absolute, universal obedience to all his commands, and how possible it is for us to attain to the practice of such an obedience; if we will but deny

our

On the First Sunday in LENT. 113

our own wisdom and our own will; and resign our selves wholly to the conduct of the divine Spirit.

A fourth reason why God commanded this sacrifice was, to teach us how to consider and value the Sacrifice of his own blessed and beloved Son, whom he hath since given for the propitiation of our Sins. For as *Abraham*, by his readiness in offering up *Isaac*, gave the highest demonstration that possibly could be given, of his love of God: So hereby God's love to us is most fully testified, in that he with-held not his only Son from us, but gave him up to suffer death for us men and for our salvation.

AND as God provided another sacrifice, which he accepted instead of *Abraham's* Son: So he redeemed us from that death which we should have suffered, by substituting his Son to suffer in our stead. These are the reasons which at present occur, why God spoke to *Abraham* to sacrifice his Son *Isaac*. We now proceed in the

III^d Place, To observe the ready obedience which *Abraham* paid to this command.

AND, first, he consulted not with flesh and blood: he did not communicate it to his wife or servants; he did not put it off from day to day. But he rose up early the next morning after God had spoke to him, and took his Son *Isaac*, with servants and wood and fire for the sacrifice, lest he should not find them at the place where he was to offer. For God had not yet told him the particular place, but shewed it him the third day of his journey, by a Ray of Light, as is supposed, pointing from heaven to the top of mount *Moriab*, where *Solomon's* Temple was afterwards erected. Though several of the Fathers were of opinion that this whole business was transacted on that very spot of ground which was afterwards called mount *Calvary*, as a prelude of Christ's offering himself

a Sacrifice there. And they say that all the mountains in and about *Jerusalem* were formerly called *Moriab*, which signifies *very conspicuous*, or visible at a great distance. *St. Jerom*, who lived long in *Palestine*, and conversed much with the *Jews*, writes, that he was assured by some of their ancient men, that *Isaac* was offered upon that very mountain where *Christ* was crucified.

THIS place was near forty miles from *Beer-sheba*, where *Abraham* now dwelt. When they were come to the foot of the hill, *Abraham* left his servants there, with the *As*s which had carried the wood, which he laid upon his Son's shoulders, telling the servants that they two would go up alone, and perform a Service and Sacrifice to God, and return to them again presently. This he said and did, because he would not be hindered by his servants in what he was going to do.

As they were going up the hill, *Isaac* expressed his wonder at what his Father meant: *For*, says he, *here is the fire and the wood, but where is the Lamb for a Burnt-offering?* To which his Father answered, *My Son, God will provide himself of a Lamb for a Burnt-offering.* Which shews that *Abraham* had not yet acquainted *Isaac* with what he was about to do. And these are all the words which passed between them, according to the account which *Moses* hath given us.

WHEN they came to the top of the hill, *Abraham* cut up Turf with the knife which he had, and raised an Altar with it, and laid the wood in order upon it, and bound *Isaac* his Son, and laid him on the Altar upon the wood. Whence we conclude that the Son was as willing as the Father to fulfil the divine command. For otherwise he might have made his escape from him, when he offered to bind him; the Father being tardy with old age, and the Son strong and nimble, being

On the Third Sunday in LENT. 111

ing now almost twenty five years old, as *Josephus* informs, and surely he must have the strength of a man, who carried up a steep hill such a burden of wood (for we read of no other that *Abraham* gathered shew) as was sufficient to have made him a Burnt-offering.

We can hardly doubt (though the Scripture is silent) that something was said both by Father and Son, when things were thus prepared for Sacrifice. *Josephus* presents us with both their Speeches, which whether they are of his own inventing, or whether he received them from ancient tradition, I know not. However finding them pious and suitable to the occasion, I think it not improper to relate them.

When *Abraham*, says he, had built the Altar, and laid the wood upon it, and prepared every thing for sacrifice, he spoke thus to *Isaac*:
 My Son, since with a thousand prayers I obtained you from God, I have always used my best endeavours to give you a good education; and in nothing did I esteem my self more happy, than to see you grown up to man's estate, that at my death I might leave you in possession of my substance. But now it being the pleasure of the most High, who made me your Father, to require you thus again at my hands, be content to become a willing Sacrifice to him, who commands us thus to honour him, and hath magnified his mercy in being my constant helper and defender. Consider, you do not die a natural death, nor go out of the World like the common sort, but are offered by your own Father to God the Parent and Lord of all things; who, as I am persuaded, thinks you too good to dye by a disease, or in war, or by any other fate incident to mankind; but chuses to have your Soul sent up to him with prayers and solemn sacrifice,

‘ sacrifice, that he may give you a seat near to himself, where you will answer the end to which I have bred you, and prove the succour and staff of my old age: for by this Sacrifice you will render God peculiarly favourable and gracious to me.’

THIS discourse *Isaac* heard with much patience and satisfaction; for he was full of his Father’s large Soul and generous sentiments: and answered, that it were pity he had ever been born, if he should oppose any thing that seemed good to God and his Father. That if his Father alone had devoted him to the Altar, he would not have resisted: much more was he bound to obey the joint commands both of God and his Father. Having said this, he submitted to be bound, and meekly composed himself to receive the sacrificing knife. Herein typifying and resembling our blessed Lord, who carried his cross up this hill, as *Isaac* bare the wood, and like him willingly surrendered himself to be fastned to it. And thus much of the ready obedience which *Abraham* paid to God, when he commanded him to sacrifice his Son.

I come now to observe, in the *IVth* Place, THE strength of his Faith, which animated him to this obedience. This will appear best by considering these great prejudices and objections which lay against the performance of this command, and yet were presently surmounted by *Abraham*’s Faith.

BESIDES the general objections that must naturally arise in a tender Parent’s mind against slaying with his own hands a pious and dearly beloved Son, and how contrary it was to the nature of a merciful God to require this, there were others of special and particular weight in this case. As, 1st, THAT when God called *Abraham* out of his country to go into the land of *Canaan*, he promised

promised to give it to his posterity for an Inheritance, and to make them a mighty people in it, and that one of his Family should arise, in whom all the Families of the earth should be blessed. Which promise was afterwards repeated, Chap. xviii. 18.

Secondly, This Son had been promised in a very solemn manner, by an embassy of Angels from heaven. *Thirdly*, He had been given by miracle,

at a time when his mother, according to the order of nature, was utterly unable to bear him.

Fourthly, When *Abraham* had a child by *Hagar* before him, yet God declared this Son to be the sole heir of his promises, and accordingly commanded the bond-woman and her Son to be put out of his Father's house, that he might have it wholly to himself. *Fifthly*, *Abraham's* and *Sarah's* names were altered by God, in token that they should be the Parents of this child, and by him, of innumerable people.

Now if *Isaac* had been cut off in the flower of his age, and before he had any child to leave behind him, what must become of the Covenant which God made with him, and the great things which he had done upon his account? According to our way of reasoning, they must have all sunk and fallen to nothing.

BUT *Abraham* reasoned after another manner, being fully perswaded that whatever God promised, he was able to perform; and in this Faith he rested, and obeyed him from first to last, without disputing the ways and means how he would make his words good. Thus, when this Son was promised at a time when nature was not productive of him, *St. Paul*, *Rom. iv.* observes the excellency of *Abraham's* Faith, who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the Father of many nations. And being strong in Faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years

gentle did; neither yet the doubts of Sarah's heart. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but glorified him by a faithful acknowledgments, that he was able to do whatsoever he pleased. This again the same St. Paul, Heb. xi. observes upon the occasion of this sacrifice: That by Faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only-begotten Son, of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead: from whence also he received him in a figure. i. e. Abraham reasoned thus upon this occasion. Hath God raised me this Son from a stock which was not able to produce such a branch, and shall not I believe that he will raise him from the dead, if I now sacrifice him in obedience to God's command? I am satisfied that he is able to do this, and will proceed in the performance of my duty, leaving it to his infinite wisdom to shew me the way how he will accomplish those blessings which he hath promised me in this very Son.

THIS proved the strength of Abraham's Faith in God; such a Faith as was able to remove mountains, mountains of difficulties which stood in the way of his obedience, all which he surmounted by a lively Faith in the divine Omnipotence, Wisdom, Veracity, and Goodness.

THIS Faith hath obtained Abraham the honourable name of the *Father of the Faithful*. I wish I could point out many of his Sons in the present generation. But our works too plainly discover the weakness of our Faith, and disprove our spiritual relation to this most religious Patriarch. For while he sacrificed every interest and affection to the command of God, and loved him above every creature, even above the dearest life which he had in the World; how grossly do we love our
selves,

selves, I mean our temporal and carnal Concomitants) How shamefully do we betray an aversion to God; and a contempt of his holy will and commandments! and are not only provided with arguments to excuse us from the practice of dangerous, difficult, mortifying and expensive duties, but even in common, easie matters, we act as if we were a law to our selves, and had no Word of God to direct us; and are so far from yielding up the dearest thing we have to his honour and pleasure, that we cannot find in our hearts to part with a little money, or renounce a little sensual lust or diversion, or spend a few hours in serious devotion and communion with God, though our obligations to do all this are most clear and undeniable.

AND we might soon be satisfied, if we would think a little, that it is not only our duty, but interest too, our temporal as well as eternal interest, to love God in the same high degree as *Abraham* did, i. e. with all the heart and soul and strength and mind. For here we see, in the reward of his obedience, what we may hope for in the like exigences. If we are brought under difficult tryals, and are not affrighted by them from pursuing our duty to the end, leaving the success wholly to God, he many times finds out a wonderful and surprizing way for our deliverance. When *Isaac* asked his Father, *Where is the Burnt-offering?* That, said *Abraham*, *God will take care to provide.* And so indeed he did, far beyond *Abraham's* expectation, who thought of nothing else but sacrificing his Son: But was most graciously diverted at the moment of execution, both by a countermand from heaven, and by a Ram caught in a thicket, which was made the real Burnt-offering. Thus God provided a Sacrifice indeed, as *Abraham* with a good Omen, though unwittingly, had foretold. And hence it became a proverb both among *Jews* and Christians,

Christians, for pious friends to say to such as were in extreme difficulties, *God will provide.*

BESIDES this immediate deliverance, God proceeded to give *Abraham* new and greater assurances of his love, than ever he had done before, ratifying with unusual solemnity his former Covenant of Blessings to him. *By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.*

LET us rejoyce, and be sensible of our felicity, that we have so great and good a Master, who is both able and willing to reward our poor services with the choicest blessings. And let this consideration excite us to continue unwearied in well-doing, that according as we have abounded in great and good works here, such shall be our reward at the last day, when we shall be called out of the grave by that blessed Son of *Abraham*, who died for our Sins and rose again for our Justification, and shall be received by him into that heavenly *Canaan* which he hath prepared for men of all Nations that believe in him, and where he liveth and reigneth, &c.





SERMON XII.

On the Second Sunday in LENT.



GENESIS xxxiv. 30, 31.

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house. And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?

IN the foregoing chapter we have an account how the Patriarch Jacob, having left the service of his father-in-law Laban at Padan-Aram, brought his family and substance into Canaan, the land of his nativity, and settled for some time at a city called Salem, under the government of Hamor the Hivite, of whom he purchased a piece of ground as a convenient situation for his Tents and other occasions of his family.

DURING

DURING his abode in this place, which the *Jewish* Doctors for good reasons compute to be near ten years, his sons, the elder especially, grew up to mens estate, and his daughter *Dinab*, the only one that he had, was sixteen or seventeen years of age. Whether her mother *Leab* was living or dead at this time, it doth not appear: but the daughter being grown to maturity, and desirous to see the Fashions of the Country, and to be acquainted with persons of her own sex in those parts, made frequent visits among them, until she came to be well known, and taken notice of in the city.

THUS visiting upon a certain day, when there was a great Fair or concourse of People met together, she was carried to the house of *Hamor*, Prince of the City, whose son *Shechem* confined her there for his pleasure, and conceiving a great affection for her, he besought his Father to apply to her friends, that they would consent to give her him in marriage.

ACCORDINGLY *Hamor* went and communed with *Jacob* about the whole affair, declaring to him as well what had happened, as what his son farther desired. *Jacob* told him, he could determine nothing in a matter of this moment, before he had conferred with his sons about it. Who when they came home (for they were in the field) and had heard what had happened, were full of indignation for the dishonour which was done their family in their sister. However, knowing very well that they were not able to take revenge of these injurious People in the way of open challenge and defiance, they dealt subtilly with them, and told them, they were prohibited by their Religion to marry with any People who were uncircumcised. And therefore they referred it to them to consider, and consult their People, whether they
would

would be content to be circumcised as they were: upon which condition they would contract the desired affinity: otherwise they would hear no more of it.

HAMOR and *Shechem* his son were well satisfied with this condition of alliance with *Israel*, and presently went into their City, and called their People together in order to communicate it to them, and perswade them to comply with it, which they endeavoured to do by the following arguments. After they had acquainted the Assembly, that the *Israelites* were inclined to settle in their Country, and become one People with them, they told them in the first place, that they were a very civilized and sociable kind of men; and that they followed the same imployment, which was feeding of cattle. In the next place they observed, that they had a great deal of land to spare, so that they might entertain these men and their herds, without straightening themselves by such partnership. Thirdly, they bid them take notice of the disproportion between themselves and the *Israelites*; how these new-comers were but a handful of men, whereas they were a considerable, well-established City: 'Now, said they, the weaker must needs submit and be servants to the stronger; and so by consequence they shall serve us, and all their wealth and substance shall be at our disposal. But to make them our own, we must give them our daughters in marriage; and they are content to marry with us, provided we be circumcised as they are; which is so cheap a purchase of the wealth and strength which we shall obtain by it, that we hope none of you will think it an unreasonable demand.

By this kind of reasoning the *Sichemites* were prevailed on, and immediately caused themselves and all their male children to be circumcised. And now

now Princes and People were smarting under their pains, which they bare with patience in contemplation of the advantages above mentioned; when behold, the sons of *Jacob*, whom they had confided in as peaceable and righteous men, became their murderers, and instead of celebrating a marriage, perpetrated a massacre upon them.

FOR *Simeon* and *Levi*, *Dinah's* brethren both by father and mother, took their opportunity the third day, when the *Sichemites* were most sore and least able to resist them, and with their Arms and the help of their Servants, as is supposed, they fell suddenly upon them, and slew *Hamor* and his son, and all the males, young and old, throughout the City. As for their wives and daughters, they took them for a prey, as they did their cattle and all their substance, whether in the city or in the field; and the rest of their goods, which were not moveable, they burnt and spoiled, that they might compleat their revenge, in the utter destruction of these *Sichemites*.

THIS Plot was concerted so closely by the two brethren, and executed so suddenly, that *Jacob* their father knew nothing of it, till it was too late to prevent it. As soon as he heard how this Tragedy had been acted, he was struck with grief and amazement, partly out of compassion to the many innocent Souls, who had been inhumanly butchered in this Massacre; and partly out of a concern for himself and his Family, who would be deemed, upon this occasion, by all their neighbours, as a crew of faithless wretches, spoilers and murderers; and that it was the common interest of the Countries round about, to arm against them, and cut them off from the face of the earth. This is what *Jacob* says in the words of my Text. *Ye have troubled me, and made me odious to the inhabitants of the land; and I being few in number,*

ber, they will gather themselves together against me and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, I and my house.

AND indeed, this must have been his fate in all human appearance, had not God rescued him by a special Providence, as we read in the following chapter, where the divine Oracle directs him to leave this place, and go up to *Bethel*, which lay at a good distance westward. In order to this removal he commands his family to purifie themselves, and put away their strange Gods; which they brought to him, and he buried them in the ground.

FOR want of this Purification we may suppose it was, that he suffered that calamity in the defilement of his daughter *Dinah*. When this was done, the Blessing of God attended him, and delivered him from that Vengeance which had otherwise pursued him. For, says ver. 5. *the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.*

NOW the occasion of this tragical story we have already seen in part, and it is included in the answer which *Jacob's* sons gave him, in the second verse of my Text, when he reproved them for what they had done to *Shechem* and his People: *Should he deal with our sister, as with an harlot?*

WHEREUPON we may observe the difference which they made in those early days of the World between a common woman, and one who had had an ingenious and virtuous education. The former no body was concerned for, nor cared how often, or to whom she prostituted herself: but the defilement of the other was esteemed a piacular crime, to which if she willingly exposed her self, no punishment was thought too severe for her. For an instance of this, we need go no farther than the xxxviiiith chapter of this book of *Genesis*, where we read that *Judah*, one of the sons of

Jacob, made no scruple to lie with an harlot whom he found sitting by the way side; but when he heard that his daughter-in-law *Tamar* had been guilty of such a practice, he cryed out, *Let her be brought forth and burnt for it*; till he was better informed of all her circumstances: which shews what an unpardonable crime such a fact was in a well-educated woman.

2dly, We may take notice of God's wrath manifested against this sin, in the case before us. For tho' *Simeon* and *Levi* carried their revenge of their sister's injury to a degree which was extravagantly cruel in the eyes of God and men, yet we cannot deny but that it was in some measure a divine Judgment, as we may conclude both from the Law which God afterwards enacted about it, and likewise from other histories of like injuries.

As for the divine Law which was given to *Israel* by *Moses*, it ordained that all Rapes and forcible Violations of female chastity should be punished with death. And this Law has been thought so agreeable to nature and right reason, that all civilized Nations of the World have received it, and continue to practise it.

THE examples of divine and human resentment of the breach of this Law, are numerous, both in sacred and other writings. To this of the *Shechemites*, we may subjoin the case of that woman *Judges* xix. who having been abused by some *Benjamites*, it stirred up such a war between them and their brethren, as had like to have ended in the destruction of their whole Tribe. In the xiiiith chapter of 2 *Sam.* we read how *Absalom* assassinated his brother *Amnon* for having abused his sister *Tamar*; and afterwards *Absalom* himself filled up the measure of his own Iniquities, and hastened to a shameful end, by going in to the wives and concubines of *David* his father.

On the Second Sunday in LENT. 147

61 If we look into the *Grecian* History, we find at the very beginning of it, that the rape of a *Spartan* Lady raised a commotion and general armament all over *Greece*, produced a ten years War, and ruined the City of *Troy*, which but just before was most rich, happy, and powerful, and the metropolis of a large Kingdom. Something of this nature occurs to us in the Records of old *Rome*. He that knows any thing of its original state, knows very well, that an injury done to a Lady by a son of their last King, occasioned one of the greatest Revolutions that ever happened in any Government; for it provoked the People to abjure Monarchy, and to set up a Common-wealth in the room of it.

THESE are monuments of the tragical events of outrageous abuses of female Chastity; and many more might be added to them. And tho' the mischiefs arising from Lewdness and Incontinence of other denominations may not be found quite so flagrant, yet they well deserve to be animadverted upon, as the common Pests of Mankind, so common indeed, that there is scarce any history wherein they may not be read; scarce any Village or Parish, wherein some Family is not the worse for them.

Of how great detriment such inordinate Lusts have proved to the highest amongst us, I need not declare in any words of my own; our Historians have abundantly done it in the course of their writings. I shall only recite a passage from one of them, which I find at the close of our *Edward* the fourth's Reign. 'His Incontinence, says that
' Historian, was the crime which procured
' both to his Government and Memory, many
' hard censures. For tho' some excuse his Lust as
' a sin, tho' black to the eye of Heaven, yet no
' way generally injurious; in regard the Inconti-

nence of one man could not be so diffusive as to wrong a multitude; nevertheless whoſo obſerves the Revolutions of Kingdoms, ſhall find no one Iniquity in Princes ſo puniſhed.' This, I muſt obſerve, is the remark of this writer, juſt after he has told how ſtrangely and quickly all this King's Iſſue were cut off and extinguished.

IN a deep ſenſe of the miſchiefs of this Sin it was, that King James I. in his book of Inſtructions to his ſon, *charges him to live a chaſte and virtuous life, and to make conſcience of his marriage vow; pointing out to him the calamities which illegitimate children had brought upon his houſe in the days both of his remote and his more immediate Predeceſſors.* This Counſel was duely obſerved by his ſon Charles, as all the writers of his Life, whether friends or enemies, unanimoſly agree. And tho' he was unfortunate in other reſpects, yet he was ſucceeded by two of his ſons; who likewiſe might have continued the ſucceſſion in their name and line, had they followed the ſame good Advice.

I am much perſwaded that moſt Kings are *Solomons* in this particular: for tho' Solomon had many women, yet he recommends it to his ſon to ſeek out for one that was ſuitable to him, and to adhere to her alone. And this he did in purſuance of the like good Inſtructions which he had received from his own mother. For it is generally agreed by Interpreters, that he is that King *Lemuel* mentioned *Prov. xxxi.* and there he introduces his own mother, ſaying to him, *Give not thy ſtrength unto women, i. e. not to variety of women, nor thy ways to that which deſtroyeth kings.* And then ſhe proceeds (ver. 10.) to characterize and ſet forth the qualifications of a good wife, which is confeſt by all to be the beſt deſcription of her that ever was or ever can be drawn.

I would

I would not be thought, in making these observations, to digress too far from the meaning of my Text. I hope I am still pursuing the scope and intention of it. For, if I understand it, it plainly warns us of the mischief of two sinful passions, which are very incident to our corrupt nature; the one, of criminal Love; the other, of cruel Revenge. *Shechem* was guilty of the former, and *Simeon* and *Levi* of the latter.

THIS latter, this excessive revenge in the murder of many innocent People, is what *Jacob* here censures and detests in his two sons. But we could not be sure that the revenge was exorbitant, before we had considered and weighed the demerits of the Injury, and seen how it had been resented by other People, in cases of a pretty near similitude. We have seen that such abuse of women as *Shechem* was here guilty of, was resented by the most civilized Nations, as a Provocation of the first magnitude. But in the case before us, we may take *Jacob's* word for it, that the Punishment far exceeded the Sin. For he was the father of the injured *Dinah*, and consequently very nearly and tenderly concerned for her dishonour. And yet he was so astonished at the slaughter which his two sons her brethren had committed upon her account, that he seems to have forgot his daughter, and thought himself much more dishonoured and injured by his own sons than by the *Shechemites*. *Ye have made me, says he, vile and odious to the world, by this bloody massacre which ye have committed.*

CERTAIN it is that this good Patriarch detested this outrage, and was displeased with the actors of it, even to the last day of his life. For in that day, when he called them all together, and declared his last Will and Testament in their presence, prophetically foretelling what portion his

children and posterity should have in the World, he remembers this fact of *Dinah's* brethren with fresh indignation, even at so great a distance of time and place, *Gen. xlix. 5. Simeon and Levi,* says he, *are brethren,* meaning brethren in Iniquity, as Interpreters well supply the sense: *Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly mine honour be not thou united.* By these words he professes that he never knew any thing of their design before-hand, nor ever approved of it afterwards. *For in their anger,* proceeds he, *they slew a man,* i. e. *Shechem,* or the singular is here put for the plural; *and in their self-will they digged down a wall,* demolished the houses of the City. *Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel. I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

THIS is the Punishment which *Jacob*, by a prophetick Spirit, foresaw should light upon the Tribes of *Simeon* and *Levi*; that as these brethren were united in such a foul Conspiracy, so their children should be separated and divided, when they came to inherit the land of *Canaan*. And this was punctually fulfilled, as the learned observe. For *Simeon's* Posterity never had any distinct Inheritance to themselves, but only a portion in the midst of the Tribe of *Judah*, as we read *Jos. xix. 1, 2.* and accordingly we find them assisting one another to enlarge their border, *Judges i. 3, 17.* and their Lot proving too straight for them, they acquired Possessions in after-times where-ever they could, at any distance from their Brethren. Thus we read, *1 Chron. iv. 39.* that five hundred of this Tribe went to mount *Seir*, and settled there. And it is a constant *Hebrew* Tradition, as *P. Fagius* observes, that a great many of this Tribe, wanting a livelihood, applied themselves to be School-masters

masters in all the other Tribes of *Israel*; where few followed this Employment but *Simeonites*; which fully verifies the Patriarch's Prediction, *I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.*

As for the other Tribe, the *Levites*, 'tis well known they had no inheritance allotted them, but were dispersed among all the other Tribes, that they might more commodiously perform certain religious Offices among them, to which they were dedicated. And this indeed proved no curse to them, but rather a blessing. But then we may observe that the Curse was taken off, upon the eminent service which the *Levites* did at the idolizing of the Golden-calf, *Exod. xxxii. 26.* For when *Moses*, upon that occasion, proclaimed, that all who were on the Lord's side should separate themselves, the *Levites* assembled and appeared before him; and at his command they armed, and fell upon the Idolaters, and slew three thousand of them. By which act they were said to have consecrated themselves to the Lord, and to have obtained his blessing. Accordingly *Moses* recommends them to the favour of God in his last words, *Deut. xxxiii. 9.* saying, *They have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.* Which could not be said of the *Simeonites*; for *Zimri*, a Prince of that Tribe, was a ring leader of his People into the *Moabitish* Idolatry, mentioned *Num. xxv.* whom *Phineas*, of the Tribe of *Levi*, slew in his zeal for the Lord; and therefore *Moses*, in his last benediction, says nothing of the *Simeonites*; but leaves them under their original curse.

THIS is an account of the Crime of *Simeon* and *Levi*, and of the Punishment which was inflicted upon them for it: and the reason of the different fate of their Posterity. The *Levites*, by signaling their zeal for the honour of God, obtained a reverse of their Judgment; but the *Simeonites* act-

ing a contrary part, remained under the bonds of the first Malediction.

THE whole may serve as a proper admonition to us all, to watch over ourselves, that we fall not into any grievous sin, which will cry mightily against us, and bring down some heavy Judgment upon us. The violence which *Shechem* offered to *Jacob's* daughter, was very offensive to God and men, as he found by woful experience. But the outrage which *Simeon* and *Levi* committed upon all the *Shechemites* for the same, was much more odious and abominable, even in the judgment of their own father. And therefore we had need take care, that whenever we are aggrieved or injured by others, we check our exasperated passions, and give them time to cool, and leave room for the use of reason, before we proceed to demand satisfaction. For otherwise we may do more mischief to our own Souls, by an excessive revenge, than we can do to those whom we desire to punish. We may wound them in body, estate, and reputation, we may deprive them of life; farther than this we cannot go: But we may damn our selves to all eternity. *Jacob* passed a sentence of condemnation on his two sons, for the murder they had committed: and can we think that they acquitted themselves? I doubt not but the Ghosts of the murdered *Shechemites* haunted them as long as they lived; and that they wished a thousand times they had been repulsed in their invasion, and hindered from executing their revenge, tho' they had received many wounds in the resistance. I question not but many a cruel murderer, however he might be possessed of thousands and ten thousands a year, would have been glad to exchange his whole estate for a staff and a wallet, and to beg his bread all over the face of the earth, provided he might but be released from that intolerable companion, a guilty

guilty Conscience, and enjoy his soul in peace, and look with pleasure, both upon this World and that which is to come. How commonly do such men curse their ungovernable passions, which for a moment's satisfaction plunge them into endless torments!

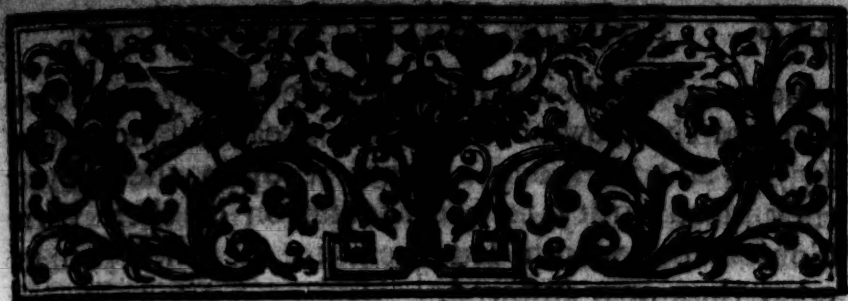
2dly, IN this case we see the reasonableness of our christian Law, which forbids men to revenge their own Injuries, *i. e.* to be Judges and Executioners in their own quarrels, and directs them to apply to a proper Magistrate, who is presumed to be free from prejudice and passion, and so qualified to judge impartially between the offending and offended parties. Indeed if every man were at liberty to avenge his own grievances, the World would quickly be turned into a wilderness of savage beasts; for such is their practice, because they are not capable of government. That which distinguishes our civil Societies from them, is patience, and reference of our injuries to proper judges: By which method the general issue of controversies is for the publick good. If *Jacob's* sons had consulted their father in the affair of their sister, and submitted the whole procedure to his judgment, who was indeed the only proper Judge on their side, we might probably have heard that the proposed Marriage and Alliance had been accomplished, and so a bad business might have come to a happy conclusion. But these rash young men would needs judge and execute by themselves, in their own way, whereby they threw the whole affair into irrecoverable confusion.

THESE considerations, I say, should endear to us that patience under Injuries, and forbearance of private Revenge, which are enjoined us by our christian Profession, and are most conducive both to the publick good, and the conscientious satisfaction of every private person. For it is much
more

more for our real advantage, that we should suffer injuries, than do them: for whatever is wanting in justice to us here, shall be abundantly compensated at his appearance, who has commanded us to be meek and lowly, and that in so doing we shall find rest for our Souls. To him with the Father and the Holy Ghost, &c.



SERMON



SERMON XIII.

On the Third Sunday in LENT.



GENESIS xlii. 21, 22.

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold also, his blood is required.



WE cannot hear these words, but we presently see the chief point of Instruction contained in them, is the power of a guilty Conscience, which pursues malefactors through all times and places, and forces them to confess a heinous Sin, without the solemnity of a tribunal, or the torture of a rack, or the conviction of an evidence. For the men who speak here, had acted their unnatural cruelty

cruelty upon their Brother above twenty years before, in their own country at a great distance from *Egypt*, and no body charges it upon them; yet they plead guilty to the accusation of their own Conscience, which led them to see their sin in what they now suffered.

To take a just view of this sin, and the occasion of it, we must look back from *Joseph* the Viceroy of *Egypt* to *Joseph* the Shepherd in *Canaan*; who when he was about seventeen years old, had several dreams which plainly prognosticated his future sovereignty over all his Father's house. These dreams he seems not to have understood at this time, but freely related them to his Brethren, as thinking them to be matters of mere curiosity, and that there was no offence in them. But they quickly perceived the true intent and meaning of them, and became envious and disaffected to him on that account.

Two other causes there were, whereby *Joseph* incurred the displeasure of his Brethren. One was, the singular affection which his Father showed for him above the rest of his children, adorning him with a finer suit of apparel, as being the Son of his old age, and of his most beloved wife who was now dead; and proving a youth of extraordinary good sense and virtuous inclinations: For, secondly, he brought to his Father the evil report of his Brethren: *i. e.* he informed him, not of some small excesses which they were guilty of; he was too good-humoured and tender of the peace of his Family, to create a disturbance in it about slips of common human infirmity; but there were some gross trespasses against God or man, or both, which his Brethren committed; which because the Scripture has not mentioned, we will not pretend to find them out by guessing at them.

FOR

FOR these reasons *Joseph's* Brethren hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him, but resolved, when opportunity served, to be revenged of him. And so it happened, that one day, when his Father sent him to them at a great distance from home, and they saw him afar off coming towards them, they conspired together to kill him, as is expressly affirmed, *Gen. xxxvii. 18, &c.* saying, *Behold, this Dreamer cometh. Come now therefore and let us kill him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his Dreams.* This they might easily do, being ten to one against him; for he had but one brother by the same mother, and he a tender helpless child, at home; and his Father an aged man, the common Parent of them all: So that they were not afraid of any body that could call them to account for the death of their Brother, even if it should afterwards come out, and be certainly known.

HOWEVER, all the ten Brethren were not in this conspiracy. For *Reuben* the eldest opposed it, though he durst not plead with them wholly to spare *Joseph*; he only advised them not to shed his blood, but rather to cast him into a dry pit hard by, where if they left him, they might be sure to be troubled no more with him; it being too deep and steep for him to get out; and if any should find him, they would take him for a prize, and carry him away as their own. This he advised with a good design; for he resolved to come again when the rest were gone away, and help *Joseph* out of the pit, and restore him to his Father.

THE Brethren, in pursuance of *Reuben's* proposal, let *Joseph* down into the pit: which when they had done, they sat down to dinner of the things which he had brought them. They had not sat long, before they saw a Caravan of *Arabi-*

ans

ans coming up, who traded to *Egypt*. Hereupon *Judab* said to his Brethren, that it was much better to sell *Joseph* to these Merchants, than to let him lye in the pit and starve. To this they all agreed, and presently drew him up out of the pit, and for twenty pieces of silver they sold him to these men, who carried him directly into *Egypt*.

THUS the Patriarchs, as St. *Stephen* speaks, sold *Joseph* out of mere envy and jealousy of his future superiority over them; and they farther envied him because he was his Father's favourite, and gave him an account of their wicked practices.

MANIFOLD was their sin, in this their malicious treatment of him. For, *First*, they intended to have shed his blood. Certain it is that some of them had the hardness to propose the dispatching of him this way. This proposal is supposed to have come from *Simeon* and *Levi*, who were hardened to shedding of blood by the Massacre which they committed upon the *Sichemites*. *Secondly*, They sinned in throwing *Joseph* into such a deep rocky pit as he could never get out of it; and so must have certainly died, without help, and that by a more painful and lingering, though less bloody death. *Thirdly*, They sinned in selling him for a slave, by which act they deprived him of that liberty to which he was born, and of the sweet society of a dear Father and Brother: they banished him from the worship of the God of his Fathers, to dwell in the tents of *Aliens* who were of another religion. They exposed him to all the hardships, vices, and corruptions of a wicked World, and endangered the breaking of his heart by mourning for the loss of his friends and country. And, *Fourthly*, they were the authors of such a piercing, intolerable affliction to their aged Parent, as threatned to bring down his gray hairs with untimely death to the grave. In all these

On the Third Sunday in LENT. 159

these respects *Joseph's* Brethren sinned in what they acted against him.

AND Conscience doubtless often presented their sin to their view in all these, and perhaps more frightful colours. The Conscience of their cruel usage of their Brother accused, upbraided, reviled them. It registered all the passages of their barbarity in the tables of their heart, as indelible as any inscription upon marble. It haunted them with the ghastly image of their injured Brother now shrieking under the scourge of some imperious task-master, now groaning under the fetters of a prison, now breathing out his soul in the agonies of death. And they could not be alone, but they dreaded that something would appear to them from the world of Spirits, and cite them in his name before the divine tribunal.

THE very name of *Joseph* was a word which filled them with gall and bitterness; they would even chuse to be deaf rather than hear it, and to be dumb rather than speak it. See at what a distance they keep from it, when they give the Governour an account of their family. *Thy Servants are twelve Brethren*; no, they knew of no more than eleven; but oh how fond they are of this number! what would they give to make it complete! At last it comes out very faintly and unwillingly, *one is not*. But why he was not, or how he came to be wanting, they abhor to tell. To say they had plotted his death, had sold him, had sent him into slavery, and perhaps into another world, was a confession which they could not frame their tongues to pronounce; and therefore they slide over the mention of this Brother as softly and briefly as ever they can; *one is not*.

THE Governour, before whom they now stood, needed no confession. He knew, as well as they could tell him, who that one was, and how they had

used him. And he knew one thing which they were wholly ignorant of, that this same lost Brother was still in being, and stood now among them. He was now making good the former prognosticks of his superiority over them, which he fulfilled according to the will of God, and the just demerits of his Brethren.

JOSEPH knew his Brethren, but concealed himself from their knowledge, speaking to them by an interpreter, as if he did not understand their language, treating them with the air of an austere and supercilious Governour, very contrary to their expectation, and much rougher, I suppose, than he treated men of other countries who came to buy corn. He challenged them for spies, who were employed by some neighbouring Prince who had a design to invade *Egypt* with an army, and sent these men under a pretence of purchasing corn, to discover the state of the country, and on what side it was easiest to make an inroad into it. And after all the humble submissions and defence which these men made, telling him whence they came, who they were, and how many in number, he would not take their word, but threw them all into prison for three days; and then when he released them, he still detained one of them as a pledge for their fidelity, that they should bring their youngest Brother with them next journey, to verifie the account which they had given him of their Family.

THIS severe dealing very much amazed them, and awakened them to reflect on what they had done to deserve it. ‘Bless us, said one, what can be the reason that nothing we can offer, will mollifie the fierce spirit of this Governour, but that after so fair an account which we have given of our selves, he will still treat us as Spies? Alas, said another, the reason of it is too plain. He

‘ He uses us just as we used our poor Brother *Joseph*.
 ‘ We hardened our selves against his entreaties,
 ‘ and the agonies he fell into, when we first cast
 ‘ him into a pit, and afterwards sold him for a
 ‘ slave: nothing of all this moved us to spare him.
 ‘ And now nothing we can say or do, renders this
 ‘ Governour favourable to us: but he throws us
 ‘ into prison, and threatens to make us his slaves,
 ‘ just as we served our Brother. Indeed, replied
 ‘ *Reuben*, the cases are much alike: only he was
 ‘ innocent, and you are guilty. I said and
 ‘ did all that I was able to persuade you to spare
 ‘ him; representing the greatness of the sin both
 ‘ against your Father and Brother. But ye were
 ‘ so obstinate in your cruelty, that nothing would
 ‘ work upon you. So now you see, his blood is
 ‘ required at your hands.’

SUCH were the reflections which these Brethren made at this time, upon a fact which they had committed near two and twenty years before. For so long ago it was, that they had sold *Joseph* into *Egypt*, and thither their guilty conscience now pursued them. Upon this occasion they had a lively scene presented to their imagination of their Brother’s tender addresses, and their own barbarity. How much he was astonished when they stript him of his coat of divers colours, as intending to sacrifice him to their bloody rancour. How he fell down upon his knees, how he lifted up his hands, how he poured forth tears, how he besought them to permit him once more to see his indulgent Father. They now remembered the lamentations which they heard him utter when they had left him in the pit, and the longing looks which he cast after them and his Father’s house, when the *Ismaelites* were carrying him into *Egypt*.

— All this now came fresh into their memory, and they applied it to their present circumstances,

at the reason of the Governor's aversion to them, upon whom their law bows, exorcistics, and supplications had no more influence, than their young and tender Brother's had upon them. *We are verily guilty concerning our Brethren, in that we saw the anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us.*

THIS is the judgment of Conscience, which can hardly be mistaken in such matters. It is agreeable to that character which the great Judge of the World hath revealed of himself: that he will render to every man according to his works: that with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again: that with the merciful he will deal mercifully; but that he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shewed no mercy. This is the moral of several parables which our Saviour spoke, particularly of that concerning the Servant, who, when his Lord had forgiven him a debt of ten thousand talents, arrested his fellow-servant for an hundred pence. The Lord of that unmerciful Servant renewed his suit against him, and cast him into prison, and charged the Exactors to keep him till he should pay the utmost farthing. This is the common voice of the Prophets and Apostles; 'Do violence to no man; shed not innocent blood; but take all opportunities to exercise loving-kindness, humanity, hospitality, beneficence to your Brethren. Comfort the feeble-minded, feed the hungry, cloath the naked, deliver the oppressed, ransom the captive, set the prisoner at liberty. Thus doing, you will manifest yourselves to be the children of that God, who is continually doing good to all the World, and whose tender mercies are over all his works. In being thus beneficent you will reap the blessed fruits of love, joy, and peace with God, with men, with your own Conscience. Your righteousness

‘business will be a surer defence to you than walls and bulwarks; you will dwell safely, and be free from the apprehensions of evil accidents.’

On the contrary, the sons of violence have *Ismael's* portion, every man's hand is against them. And God who is the avenger of wrongs, and makes inquisition for blood, pursues them with his vengeance till it overtakes them. And their own guilty Conscience is like a fire that burns them, or a worm continually gnawing in their breast, making them a terror to themselves, and frightening them even with their own shadows.

No sooner had *Cain* murdered his Brother *Abel*, but he made such a wound in his own spirit, as destroyed all his peace and tranquillity and enjoyments of life. He could not rest night nor day for the cries of his expiring Brother, which continually pierced his ears: He could not look about him, but he fancied that heaven and earth frowned on him, and grudged him their light, their air, and use of all their elements. He thought that not only men, of whom there were then but few in the World, but that every creature had a commission from God, to fall upon him, and shed his blood in revenge of his Brother's.

THE like Furies are the direful attendants upon all those who are guilty of the like sins. They are incessantly arraigning them, and reading to them their just doom, *Whosoever sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.* Which words though they are a particular form of God's own inditing in this very book, and consequently can be known to none but those who have the perusal and preaching of his word; yet the sense of them is as extensive as the whole race of mankind, being naturally written in the tables of every man's heart. It is natural for every man to conclude, that the divine Justice will deal with him by the law of

retaliation, and make him drink of the same cup which he hath filled out to others. This conclusion, we hear, was readily made by *Joseph's* Brethren, when they were imprisoned and in danger of being made slaves, that God was dealing with them as they had used their Brother, and that as they had hardened themselves against him, when he besought them in the anguish of his Soul, so now the Governour turned a deaf ear to their most earnest and lowly supplications.

OTHER examples there are upon record, which show that it has been a common method of the divine Justice to punish Sinners by retaliation; and that they have readily apprehended and understood it to be so. There is a notable instance of this, *Judges i.* where we read, that when the men of *Judah* had taken *Adonibezai*, a *Canaanitish* King, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes, he made this confession upon the occasion: *Three-score and ten Kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my Table: as I have done, so God hath requited me.* This proud Tyrant had insolently trampled upon his fellow-creatures for many years, depressing Princes to the condition of dogs, in making them feed upon the scraps under his table, and using them worse than those brutes, by maiming them in a barbarous manner. But see how exactly his cruelty was retaliated, at a time when he probably thought God had forgotten him.

THE consideration of what hath been said, should dispose us to deal mercifully with our Brethren, and to abstain from doing them any injury or wrong, as knowing that we cannot hurt them without wounding our own Conscience, and arming the divine Vengeance against us. And what a dreadful state is this, into which all violent, inhuman, barbarous wretches plunge themselves!

On the Third Sunday in LENT. 165

selves! who for the gratifying of an infernal passion, throw away their peace, and get such a venomous sting in their Conscience, as they are never able to cure! And therefore,

2dly, **T**HIS should excite us to watch and pray against those fiends of envy, malice and revenge, that they enter not into our Souls; for if once admitted, they quickly grow too strong for us, and make us so many fire-brands of Satan, both to our selves, and to all about us. He that in a transport of such passions assaults others, oftentimes meets with his own bane, if not immediately upon the spot, yet in a course of justice, by the penalty of those Laws against which he hath offended. And if his wit, or riches, or power and interest in the World, should save him from the lash of human Laws, yet what will this avail him, so long as he lyes under the sentence of God's wrath, and the tortures of his own Conscience? which are so painful as to make him wish seriously and daily, that he had been the Sufferer rather than the Doer of an injury. For while the Sufferer is hurt in body or estate, the Doer is wounded in his Soul and Spirit. When *Joseph* was sold for a slave into *Egypt*, he endured hardship for some time; but whatever his outward circumstances were, he had always the comfort of a good Conscience, and God was always with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions. Whereas his Brethren who sold him, had the continual anguish of a guilty mind, for two and twenty years together, as it is discovered in the words of my Text; during which time, they could neither look upon their Father, nor think of their Brother, without heavy hearts and fearful apprehensions. So that *Joseph*, in the worst state of his banishment, was a much happier man than his Brethren, in all their enjoyments of their own country and their Father's house.

347. HEREUPON we may observe how truly and exactly the Law of God directs us to the attainment of happiness. It makes nothing our duty, which is not naturally interwoven with our interest, and necessary to our own welfare and comfort. To refrain from violence, oppression and wrong, to abound in works of charity and mercy, is not only conducive to the good of mankind in general, but essential to our own particular peace and satisfaction, and not less, but even more beneficial to the Givers than to the Receivers. In this the children of light are manifestly known from the children of darkness. Whosoever delights in works of beneficence, and endeavours to procure the present and future salvation of mankind, is born of God. But whoever can please himself with the miseries of his fellow-creatures, and takes a pride in crushing and consuming them, is a seed of that grand adversary of mankind who was a murderer from the beginning.

NOTHING so much recommends us to God; nothing makes us so much partakers of his happiness, as a beneficent temper. For he could not be infinitely happy, if he were not infinitely good and gracious. And in proportion to our beneficence shall be our happiness in the Kingdom of Heaven: We have Christ's own word for this, in his account of the judgment of the last day.

EXCELLENT therefore is the Law which commands us to love our neighbours as our selves; for he that hates his neighbour is a murderer, a self-murderer, he shuts himself out from the inheritance of eternal Life. By such hatred he shows he has not the root and principle of life in him. Hence we affirm that the truest and highest degree of self-love is, to love our neighbours as our selves. Though the contrary is generally thought to be true, and the narrow-soul'd man is esteemed the

On the Third Sunday in LENT. 167

the self-lover, yet it is quite otherwise. For he who hates his neighbour, by a necessary consequence hates himself.

AND that is an excellent summary of the Law and the Prophets, which our Lord hath given us in this brief sentence, *whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, even so do ye to them.* It is by the just providence of God, that men commonly deal well or ill with us, according as we have dealt with others. But if the World should happen to spare us, yet the wrath of God and the guilt of inhumanity will lie heavy upon us; for the Gospel reads our doom before-hand, *That if we are not merciful to men, neither will our heavenly father be merciful to us.*

To conclude: as we profess our selves the adopted children of God in Christ, so let us bring forth the fruits of his Holy Spirit, which are, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness. Let us put on the bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind; and let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, malice, and revenge be banished from amongst us, that we may avert the wrath of God, and be settled to his clemency and fatherly compassion, which, upon these conditions, he hath promised us in the Son of his love, Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom, &c.





SERMON XIV.

On the Fourth Sunday in LENT.



GENESIS xlv. 5.

Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with your selves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve life.

SURPRISING was the discovery which *Joseph* made of himself to his brethren. He had hitherto carried it with the high state and grandeur of the Viceroy of *Egypt*, and treated them with a sterner look and rougher usage than he would have shown to other men. And that for a very good reason. It was to try them how they stood affected towards their own family: for he knew by his own experience that they had been very unnatural in this respect. But now having made a thorough and severe tryal of their affections, and hearing them speak such tender things of their father and brother *Benjamin* as he was sure came from their heart, and seeing them ready to ransom the latter from slavery even with their own lives

lives and liberty, he was not able to contain himself any longer, but bursting out into a flood of tears, told them *he was their brother Joseph whom they had sold into Egypt.*

At this word they were so astonished, that they had no power to make him any answer. To hear so great a man call himself their brother *Joseph*, raised such strange thoughts and terrible reflections in their minds as quite confounded them: wherefore *Joseph*, to convince them that he spoke truth, and to confirm what he had said, repeated it very seriously, and fell into very familiar and friendly discourse with them, whereof these words of my Text are a part: *Be not grieved, nor angry with your selves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you, to preserve life.*

IN which words there are three things worthy our observation.

I. *JOSEPH's* tender remission of the offence which his brethren had committed against him. *Be not grieved, nor angry with your selves about it.*

II. THE reason which he assigns for alleviating their grief: *It was not you, but God who sent me hither.*

III. THE good end which was served by his being sold into *Egypt*. *God sent me before you to preserve life.*

I. THE first thing we have to observe, is *Joseph's* kind remission of his brethren's offence, and his tender concern for them, lest they should be overwhelmed with too much grief and indignation at themselves for what they had done to him. It was natural for them to abhor themselves, to hang down their heads, to hide their faces, and not dare to look up; or speak to a brother whom they had so grossly injured; especially now, when they found him in such great and glorious Circumstances. He saw them sinking under a load of shame

shame and fear, remorse and sorrow for what was past, and endeavour'd to revive them and cheer up their spirits with assurances of his pardon and reconciliation, and with such arguments as might abate the edge and sting of their guilty resentments.

THIS free and hearty reconciliation was a proof of *Joseph's* excellent spirit, speaking him superior to all injuries, and endued with a goodness which could overcome the greatest evil. For he not only pardons his unnatural brethren, but sympathizes with them in the sorrow which they conceived upon this occasion, and desires to make them ease both in their own minds, and with one another. For as here he exhorts them not to be too much grieved and vexed within themselves, so afterwards he charges them *not to fall out with one another by the way*, as they were returning home. He knew how apt they would be to lay the blame one upon another, as 'tis common in such cases; and certain it is, that some of them were more blameable than others. And therefore their brother, who was the suffering party, and had most right to forbid quarrels upon his account, makes an act of oblivion, as I may say, for them, and enjoins them to mention this business no more, nor, if it were possible, so much as to think of it.

How unlike to *Joseph* are the generality of offended brothers? of whom, scarce one in his condition but would have reasoned thus. 'These men are my brethren but by one of our Parents; and by their disaffection have been my constant enemies. While I was a child amongst them, they could never afford me a kind look, or a good word; but sought all opportunities to cut me off from the family by death or banishment. They once resolved to murder me, and at last sold me for a slave. And now that I am advanced

to the Government of Egypt, contrary to their intentions and wishes, they seek to me for relief in this time of scarcity. But I do not think myself obliged to provide for any of them, except my father and brother Benjamin. These two I will fetch hither, and give them the fat of the land of Egypt. For the rest, let them stay where they are, and fare as they deserve.

THIS is naturally men's way of reasoning and acting upon such occasions: And they think they are bound, by the rules of prudence and justice, to this kind of dealing. But Joseph shews that he had a great measure of the Spirit of God in him, inasmuch as he acted by those supernatural dictates which say, *If thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Rep recompense to no man evil for evil; but always overcome evil with good.* These Rules, which were afterwards published in the book of the divine Law, were then written in Joseph's heart; by vertue of which he extended his compassion and beneficence to the worst as well as to the best of his brethren.

BUT when Joseph exhorts his brethren not to be troubled in their minds, nor to reflect upon one another for what they had done against him, This is not intended to perswade them that they had committed no offence, or that they had nothing to repent of before God upon his account. He speaks more plainly and fully afterwards, chap. 1. when, after their father's death and burial, they sent to him, and waited on him, confessing their trespass against him, and asking his forgiveness in the name and for the sake of their deceased Father. He answered them, *As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now there-*

therefore fear ye not ; I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

WE see then, that *Joseph's* pardoning his brethren and speaking comfortably to them, did not perswade them to conclude that they had done no evil. No, they were sensible of it and confess it, seventeen years after he had spoke to them in the words of my Text. And indeed it would be very disingenuous in any of us, when we have offended God or man, to conclude that we are innocent, because they have pardoned us. It is enough for us, that we are restored to their favour, and excused from the punishment we had deserved. But if we were not always sensible of our offence, and ready upon all proper occasions to acknowledge it, we should be utterly unworthy of any pardon.

II. WE come now in the *second* place to consider the reason which *Joseph* assigns for alleviating his brethrens grief and anger at themselves, for what they had done against him. *It was not you,* says he, *but God who sent me hither.* This is strictly true. His brethren sold him to the *Ismaelites*, to dispose of him as the purchasers pleased : whether in *Egypt*, or in any other Country, it was all one to them. Their business was to send him far enough from their own family, without troubling themselves to think what should become of him. But God, who had fore-ordained that *Egypt* should be the place of his advancement, and scene of his great actions, conducted all the changes and chances of his life to the accomplishment of this end. And thus he governs the World in an infinite number of events which happen every day, to convince us that he reigns over every Creature, and to manifest the all-sufficiency of his *Power, Wisdom, and Goodness.*

1st, God

On the Fourth Sunday in LENT. 173

1st, God over-rules the evil actions of men, so as to demonstrate his *Power* and *Providence* in the government of the World. There is not any work done by any man living, but God orders and directs the issue of it, so as to turn it to the benefit or hurt of Mankind, as he in his just judgment sees most reasonable and expedient. I confess God is not the author of most things which are done by men, for they are contrary to his Will and Commandment; and he can never contradict himself. He has given us a freedom of will, by vertue of which we do good or evil, according as our Inclinations lead us: and because our Inclinations are generally sinful, therefore we chuse to do that which for the most part is evil. In which the impulsive Will of God, *i. e.* his Spirit, can have no share. But let us do what we will, I say the issue and event of our doings is in the hands of God, who directs them, according to Mens demerits, for the benefit or punishment of the World. This over-ruling Power is so much the prerogative of God, that we shall not only fail of hindering his Will, in the government of the World, but we shall be sure directly to advance it, even then when we seem to act most contrary to it. For a proof of this, we need seek no farther than the case here before us. *Joseph's* brethren understanding that he had dreams which prognosticated his superiority over them, were resolved to frustrate the accomplishment of these dreams, by disposing of the dreamer in such a manner as should render the event impossible. And first they proposed to kill him out-right: But this being opposed by some of them as too horrid; they agreed presently to cast him into a deep pit, out of which he could never rise again. This done, a company of *Arabian* Merchants came up at that instant: whereupon a thought was started by one
of

of them, which presently took with the rest, that they would sell him for a slave to these Merchants; so out of the pit they hoist him, and send him away by these *Arabians* to *Egypt*, not doubting but that hereby they had effectually cut him off from ever reigning over them.

Now all this while they were doing the very thing, which they most earnestly strove to prevent. For God had decreed that *Joseph's* superiority over his brethren should be attained in *Egypt*, to which they could not have contributed more directly, than they did by sending him thither at the time and in the way before related.

H E R E I N is manifested the sovereign Power of God, how easily he changes Mens purposes, to make them comply with his decrees. He would not suffer these men to kill their brother outright, nor to starve him in a pit, tho' they had resolved upon both; but he permitted them to sell him into *Egypt*, as being a way entirely subservient to the divine Will.

1stly, G O D over-rules the evil actions of Men so, as to magnifie his own *Wisdom* in the government of the World. *Joseph's* brethren took the most effectual course in all human probability to depress him so low, that he should have always been the foot and not the head of his Family. If any one of them who had been his friend more than the rest, had undertaken to have comforted him at the sale with saying, 'Be content, child, to go into *Egypt*, for this is the readiest way for you to become the greatest Man there;' the rest would have certainly laughed him to scorn, and would have interpreted such a saying as an abusive mockery, as well knowing that this was the most unlikely way in the world to any high station. And yet when we look upon the chain of causes which led to it, we must confess it all runs very
natural

natural and easie. But God alone could foresee this. He who orders all things, could know, that it was proper for *Joseph* to live as a servant in a great house, that he might be bred up in the knowledge of the affairs of *Egypt*; that he should be cast into the same Prison with the King's Butler, in order to be called to Court by him; that he should have more wisdom than all the Magicians of *Egypt*, to be able to explain the King's dreams which prognosticated a Famine; and that he should have the best abilities of any man in the Nation, to govern it well in such a great exigence. All this could be known to him only who knows all things: and his Wisdom is admirable in ordering it, and bringing it to pass. No other method that we can conceive, would have been comparable to this of the divine Oeconomy.

3dly, GOD's over-ruling the evil actions of men, very much illustrates his *Goodness* in the government of the World. Intolerable would be the misery of this present state of things, if the works of wicked Men and Devils were always to have their natural effect and issue. No body who knows the World can deny, but that the most civilized parts of it are much pestered with a seed of evil-doers, who make no scruple to subvert and ruin their honest, innocent Neighbours, whether by secret fraud or open violence, as oft as they can find opportunity to do it with safety to themselves. The destructive passions which infected *Joseph's* brethren, boil in the hearts of abundance of people, who are only restrained by fear from letting them loose to the confusion of all society. What murders, robberies, cheats, and innumerable abuses would be committed more than now are, did not God by a miraculous good Providence often defeat the authors, before their works of darkness were ripe for execution; and at other times,

times, where Sin has been finished, how strangely has it brought forth death to the Actors in their greatest security, when they have said, *No eye hath seen us?* I say, it is the Goodness of God to bring to light the hidden things of darkness before they are put in practice, in order to prevent their mischiefs; and when they are not prevented, to pursue, find out, and punish the wicked Instruments, that others may hear, and fear, and do no more so wickedly. The providential discoveries of Murderers, Robbers, and other enemies of mankind, are absolutely needful to supply the defects of human sagacity and penetration. For a crafty Malefactor will often triumph over his Judge and Jury, as well knowing that all the evidence which can be brought against him, will not be able to convict him. But when this criminal is possessed with an apprehension, grounded upon unquestionable testimonies, that God's Judgments find out those sinners who escape the sentence of human Tribunals, this apprehension is always uppermost in his thoughts, and fills his eyes with apparitions, and his ears with voices which summon him to the Judgment of God. The histories of such Judgments restrain some from committing enormities; and the experience of them keeps back others who have entred, from proceeding in them. And so God turns the gall of a guilty Conscience, into an antidote against sin. Many a man, who was once in a spiritual Lethargy, hath been awakened by some great offence to look about him, to see his weakness, and to stand upon his guard the whole remaining part of his life. I am very much of opinion that *Joseph's* brethren, after they had sold him, became better Men. Before this, they had but a bad character, *an evil report*, as the Scripture informs us: but afterwards we hear no evil of them. On the contrary, we may conclude from

from their History, that they recovered a true temper, and just affection for all their Family. This is the Goodness of God, who delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but turns the falls of some Men into an occasion of their firmer standing for the time to come. Which brings me to the

III^d THING I proposed to observe, viz. The good end which was served by Joseph's being sold into Egypt; God sent him thither before the rest of his family, to preserve their lives. This shows that God's thoughts are not as Man's thoughts, nor his ways like our ways. In such transactions with the World as this, we are commonly set on work by some carnal lust or irregular passion, and are so far from aiming at the Glory of God, or the welfare of our Brethren in what we do, that we grossly postpone them, and sacrifice them to the pleasure of our own vicious lust. But he whose alone property and power it is, to bring good out of evil, so orders the unruly wills of sinful men, as to make them subservient to the fulfilling of his decrees, when they least intend it. Joseph's brethren, when they sold him, had no other view, but to gratifie their spleen in punishing him, and to disappoint the ambition of an assuming youth, as they looked upon him to be, who begun thus early to think of being their Master. But God's design was, to make him a Master indeed, even a Father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all Egypt. He knew that Joseph was the most capable Man in the World, not only to foresee a Famine, but to provide against it, and by his plentiful provisions to save the lives of many People, and among the rest, of his own Family. What a misfortune had it been to them all, if so useful a Man had been cut off, before he had finished this great work? They who once despised and hated him, now love

Vol. III. N and

and admire him: they willingly bow to his sovereignty over them, and rejoice in it, as the work of God for the preservation of their lives.

How happy is it for us, that God governs the World! How many blessings should we deprive our selves of, if we were left to the full execution of our own wills, or the conduct of our own narrow views and erroneous judgment! Alas, if every man were to chuse for himself, and to have his own particular desires fulfilled, there would be neither summer nor winter, seed-time nor harvest, there would be all masters and no servants, all rich and no poor, all would live in ease and pleasure, and none would fatigue himself with labour, or run any hazard, and so there would be an end of Trade and Commerce, mutual succour and assistance, and consequently of the very Life and Being of mankind.

WE are at best but children in understanding, and commonly suffer that share of reason we are owners of, to be born down and controuled by our Passions. What is the difference between childhood and manhood? In both states our great concern is to please our selves. In our advanced years, we do not correct our childish appetites, but only vary and enlarge their objects, and are so much worse than we were before, that we act more knowingly against the Laws of Religion and Reason. Who knows not the difference between Virtue and Vice, and that it is much better for him to mortifie his vicious inclinations than to indulge them? And yet how few practise according to this knowledge? Most men satiate themselves with a comparative Virtue. One thinks himself virtuous, because he abstains from reigning sensualities: but the reason of his abstinence is, because he has no appetite to them, or they do not fall in with his way of life and business. He

in a sober man, because he has no temptation to be otherwise; his constitution or his circumstances oblige him to be so. But he suffers himself to be captivated by spiritual Sins; by pride, envy, wrath, hatred, cruel and unmerciful affections. He makes his very temperance an occasion of casting uncharitable reflections upon others: He will not spare to call the very Minister of Religion a glutton and drunkard, a friend of publicans and sinners, if he prove not altogether as abstemious as himself. Happy is it therefore for mankind that God governs the World, that he is the Judge of all men, that he will render to every man according to his works.

THE application I would make of all this, is to persuade men to conform themselves entirely to the Will of God, both as it is revealed by his Word, and exercised by his Providence. For who ever resisted his Will with any good success? His Precepts are our best direction to happiness, and his Providence the best security of our life, and health, and freedom from evil. While Joseph's brethren were violating the most sacred laws of piety and natural affection, in order to prevent his superiority over them, they were fighting against the greatest temporal Blessings that ever befall them in the course of their lives. Even so when we oppose God in the government of the World, and break thro' his Laws to come at those things which we think are best for us; when we accuse the dispensations of his Providence by murmuring and repining at them, and are peevish and discontented under any tryal which he is pleased to bring upon us, we forsake the only way of our deliverance, and run into those by-ways which, without his undeserved goodness, must lead us to inevitable perdition.

LET us then be punctual in the performance of our duties to God and the World, using that reasonable care, industry, and thriftiness which the laws of piety and prudence require of us, and let us trust him with the disposal of our lives and fortunes. He has many *Josephs* at command, many instruments whereby he can work our deliverance out of the most dangerous and deplorable Circumstances. Why should we be afraid to trust that God who first inspired us with the breath of life, and in whom we still continue to live, move, and have our being? Only let us lay a good foundation of our Faith: let us render him that obedience, honour, and love which is due to him; let us seek his Kingdom and Righteousness in the first place, and then we may depend upon his fatherly goodness, that he will give us all things needful for the body, according to the promise of Christ our Lord, in whom he hath chosen us, with whom he will give us food convenient for us, To whom with the Father, &c.



SERMON



SERMON XV.

On the Fifth Sunday in LENT.



EXODUS V. 1, 2.

And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a Feast unto me in the Wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.

IN the foregoing Chapters we have an account how God appeared unto Moses, and told him that he had determined by his means and management to deliver his people Israel out of Egypt, and conduct them to the Land of Canaan. For now the time of the Promise which God had made to Abraham, Gen. xv. that he would work this deliverance, was expired. *Thy seed, says he, shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them four hundred years. Which years are to be reckoned from the time that God's Promise was made to Abraham, who himself, and Isaac his Son,*

sojourned in *Egypt*, and not from the descent of *Jacob* with his family thither. For from that descent to this deliverance, Chronologers reckon but two hundred and fifteen years, which they make out thus, *viz.* Fifty six of the Life of *Cobath* the Son of *Levi*, seventy nine of the Life of *Amram*, *Cobath's* Son, and eighty of the Life of *Moses* the Son of *Amram*.

BUT that which determines *Israel's* deliverance to this particular period, is that other part of the Promise which God made to *Abraham*, *Gen.* xv. that *his seed should come out of Egypt in the fourth Generation*, which was now: for *Moses* was the great grand-child of the Patriarch *Levi*. Him therefore God instructs how to go about this work. 'Go, says he, and take *Aaron* thy elder Brother with thee, and gather together the Elders of *Israel*, and certifie them, that the God of your Fathers hath seen the oppression wherewith the *Egyptians* oppress them, and hath heard the cry of their sufferings under their task-masters, and hath sent you to bring them forth out of *Egypt*, unto the land of *Canaan* which he sware to your Fathers, that he would give them.' And because *Moses* was afraid that the Elders would not believe him upon his bare word, God enabled him to work miracles for their full conviction, which are the first works of that kind that ever were wrought in the World.

WHEN *Moses* and *Aaron* had convinced the Elders, that God had given them the Commission aforesaid, then, by the divine appointment, they went all together to the King of *Egypt*, and delivered their message to him, and received such answer as is related in the words of my Text.

THEY demanded, in the name of the God of the *Hebrews*, leave for them and their people to go three days journey into the Wilderness of *Arabia*,

rabia, to offer sacrifice and hold a feast unto the Lord their God. The King answered them, that he knew nothing of their God, neither would he grant any such leave as they desired.

U P O N which words several queries and doubts will arise. As, *First*, W H Y did they ask leave to go but three days journey into the Wilderness, when their design was to go quite away, and never return more? The reason was, because they had God's express orders to ask no more at first. He that knew the King's heart, foresaw that he would not permit them to go thus far, for a good while, till he and his *Egyptians* had smarted severely for the refusal, and had been wasted by many prodigious calamities and judgments: And that then at last they would even thrust them out, and be glad to be rid of them for ever. So that there was no need to ask any more at the first than a three days journey for sacrifice: which was a modest request. It would have been thought harsh and unreasonable to have asked all that they desired and intended, at their very first application. To have told the King that they were all going to leave him upon such short warning, might have been some excuse for his peremptory denial. *Secondly*, W H Y did they ask leave to offer Sacrifice at this particular time? I answer, Their ancestors, *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob* offered sacrifice to God; the last particularly sacrificed at *Berenbeba*, when he was upon his journey towards *Egypt*. Whence I conclude it to be highly probable that their posterity in *Egypt* kept up the same custom, while the Kings were favourable to them, and went out yearly, and held a feast and sacrifice in the way and manner which they now petition for. I confess this is but a conjecture, there being nothing said of it in the sacred History. But we know this history is so very short, that it takes no no-

tice how they lived in *Egypt*, till towards the latter end of their sojourning there, when by the tyranny and jealousie of strange Kings they fell under grievous oppression, and thenceforth they were certainly restrained from meeting together in such large assemblies, as being thought dangerous to the Government, which had now given them cause of discontent, by their hard usage of them. But in former time when they were treated as friends, 'tis very likely they were allowed to observe the rites of their own religion, and to hold such a general assembly as is here mentioned. However, what they say here is very true, that God had appeared to them, and demanded such a sacrifice of them: which was ground enough for them to apply to the King for leave to offer it. And they might well express their fears lest some mark of the divine wrath should light upon them if they neglected it. For men of all religions were sensible, that God would not excuse them for what he commanded in such an extraordinary manner, till they had performed it.

3dly, W H Y do they ask to go out into the Wilderness to offer this sacrifice? *Moses* gives the reason of this, Chap. viii. 25. where when *Pharaoh* bids them sacrifice in the land where they were (in *Goshen*) without going any farther: *Moses* answers, *It is not meet so to do: for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God. Lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?* This place is by several Interpreters paraphrased thus: 'We must sacrifice to our God oxen, & sheep, and goats, which the *Egyptians* worship & adore: and that would be such an abominable impiety in their account, as would provoke them to fall upon us with the utmost fury.' Now though there was a time when the *Egyptians*

On the Fifth Sunday in LENT. 185

mans idolized these animals, as Greek and Latin writers inform us, yet their superstition did not grow to this height till some hundred years after this: For *Herodotus*, who lived many ages after *Moses*, and travelled in *Egypt*, assures us, 'that oxen and calves which had such marks whereby the Priests judged them to be clean, were sacrificed all over *Egypt*.' Though he confesses they spared their kind in honour of *Isis*, whom they painted with horns, and fancied to be once turned into that beast. As for other creatures, they were divided in their esteem of them: for in some places they abstained from sheep and sacrificed goats: others, on the contrary, spared their goats and sacrificed their sheep. But these distinctions came in long after the days of *Moses*; in whose time we may allow, that the *Egyptians* were of the same opinion with all mankind, that these animals might be used in religious sacrifices; only they were so addicted to their own ways and rites of sacrificing, that they could not endure to see this religious act performed by any but themselves.

THAT the *Egyptians*, before the days of *Moses*, had separated themselves from other people by many peculiar customs, appears from the account of the entertainment which *Joseph* made for his Brethren. At which though several *Egyptians* were present, yet they did not eat at the same table with them, but had their dinner prepared in their own way, and eat it by themselves: *because*, says he, *the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination to them.* And afterwards *Joseph* instructed his Brethren to tell the King that they were all brought up to feed cattle, that so he might place them in the land of *Goshen*, *because shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians.* And so they lived separately for a while, though afterwards the two people were much

much mingled, as appears from this and other chapters of *Exodus*. Whence we conclude that by degrees they had conquered their old prejudices in matters of common life: Indeed they could not otherwise have the *Israelites* about them, so as to make use of their service both in cities and fields. But as for their Sacrifices, they would not endure the sight of them, as we heard before; and therefore it was proper for *Moses* and the Elders to beg leave to go at some distance upon this occasion.

THE reigning King, who was a great oppressor of the *Israelites*, suspected that their plausible request about sacrificing was used only to cover a farther design which they had in agitation. There had been a current prophecy in his predecessor's days, that a Hebrew child was coming into the World, who should deliver *Israel* out of *Egypt*. To prevent which the Egyptian King took the same method as *Hierod* used afterwards, commanding that all the male-children of the *Jews*, which should be born within such a time, should be instantly destroyed. This great occurrence could not be unknown to his present successor. And he must needs know a great deal more than this. The records of *Egypt* were not so ill kept, as that he could be ignorant of the history of *Joseph*, and upon what occasion his Father's house came and settled in *Egypt*; and how they worshipped that God who had enabled *Joseph* to interpret the King's dreams, and had raised him to be his Viceroy, and had promised about this time to give them the land of *Canaan* for their Inheritance. And therefore when this King says, he knew not that Lord in whose name they petitioned him, he means, that he had never heard that name of God by which they called him in their language; and though they presently explain themselves, that they mean the God of the *Hebrews*, of whom he could

not be wholly ignorant; yet he professed no obedience to him; but the contrary: he was persuaded that the Gods which he worshipped were superior to the God of *Israel*, and in this confidence he declares that he will not give them leave to go and sacrifice to him.

THAT is far in general of God's message to *Pharaoh*, and his answer: let us now compare them together a little more strictly, and then we shall see how reasonable the request, how unreasonable the refusal.

1st, THE request was enforced with divine authority, *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel*. Suppose this had not been true, yet it should not have been answered with a sudden refusal. For God has generally raised up Prophets and Messengers of the sons of men to declare his will to the rest of mankind. And though they have been never to mean in their persons and outward circumstances (as they many times have been, though these were not) yet wise Princes have never rejected them, except their pretensions have carried a manifest absurdity and contradiction along with them. When they have any face of truth, they deserve a serious regard and examination. For if any one came to us in the name of our King, if it were in such a manner as we knew was agreeable to the King's custom of sending, all the World would condemn us, and we could not justify our selves, did we not receive such a messenger with a reverence due to his character, and to the dignity of his Master. How much more should we be attentive to one who comes to us in the name of the Lord, and hear him with patience, and consider well the import of his message! If he should prove a deceiver, no punishment can be bad enough for him; but if we should unhappily reject the truth, nothing

thing can serve to excuse us. Wise men, I say, will be careful not to offend in this.

WHEN the King of *Nineveh* had heard the message of *Jonah*, calling him and his people to repentance in the name of the Lord; we do not find that he examined the Prophet, who he was and whence he came; nor despised him for being an unknown poor man. But being conscious of the sins of his *Ninevites*, which well deserved such a reproof and warning, he presently commanded them to repent accordingly, and so averted the threatned judgment. On the contrary, those Kings which have despised such messages, have perished through their own contempt. Of which number was this King of *Egypt*, who had abundant reason, as I shewed before, to expect that about this time the God of *Israel* would demand the release of his people: And therefore to reject this demand with such a flat denial, was contrary to that reverence which was due to such a message delivered to him in the name of the Lord.

II. THE request being reasonable for the matter of it, and delivered in terms of suitable respect, deserved a gracious answer. God had directed *Moses* to tell *Pharaoh*, that *Israel* was his people, intimating that he had not given them up to the disposal of the King of *Egypt*: that *Israel* was his Son, his first-born, and consequently dearer to him than the *Egyptians*. He had ordered *Moses* to entreat courteously, and beseech the King to let his people go three days journey into the Wilderness, that they might sacrifice to him. This was a very modest demand, and *Moses* offered it with that humble address which was prescribed. God has placed Princes in the seat of honour, and will have his messengers to approach them with humble obedience. But if, on their part, they refuse to re-
verence

verence him that is higher than the highest, whose Vicegerents they are, and by whom and for whom they reign, saying with *Pharaoh*, *I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice*, then he proceeds to make himself known to be God, and to make them know themselves to be but men, by dealing plainly with them, threatning them, and finally punishing them for their contempt, as he dealt with *Pharaoh* in the course of this History, and as he afterwards treated the wicked Kings of his own people.

IF the King, laying aside his suspicion and prejudice, had taken the petitioners at their word, and generously bid them go sacrifice to their God, he had not only saved himself and his people from manifold destruction, but had doubtless received from God's hand more than an equivalent for his loss of *Israel*. For benefits are productive of beneficial returns both from God and man, whereas cruel usage arms the vengeance of both against the oppressor. Instances of the latter we may find abundant in this Book of *Exodus*. Of Benefits returned we have a memorable example 1 *Sam.* xv. 6. where when King *Saul* was commissioned by God to cut off *Amalek* from the face of the Earth for cruelly assaulting distressed *Israel* in the Wilderness, we read that he first took care to separate the *Kenites* from them, saying, *Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt*. Another example of such grateful return we have 2 *Kings* vi. 13. which happened in the wars between *Syria* and *Israel*. The King of *Syria* had heard that the Prophet *Elisha* discovered his most secret Counsels to the King of *Israel*; whereupon the *Syrian* sent his army to apprehend the Prophet, being then in *Dothan*. But *Elisha*, in the power of
that

that great courage which God gave him, boldly went to the Soldiers, and offered himself to lead them to the man whom they sought after; and before they were aware, he brought them into *Samarita*, the metropolis of *Israel*. When the King of *Israel* found how his enemies were fallen into his hands, he begged of the Prophet, that he might fall upon them and cut them to pieces. But *Elifha* answered, *Thou shalt not smite them. Wilt thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.* The King readily hearkened to this advice; and made them a plentiful entertainment: and when they had eaten and drank, he sent them home safely: So these bands of *Syria* came no more into *Israel*. For though *Benhadad* proceeded in the war, yet these men, in a conscientious regard of the kindness they had received, would never more bear arms against their benefactors. And God, to make the King of *Israel* a full recompence for his humanity to his enemies, and obedience to the word of the Prophet, soon granted him a happy issue of this War.

No less favour would God have shown to the *Egyptians*, if they had but proved obedient to his voice. How many times did he release them from punishment, upon their bare promise to release his people! And afterwards he enjoined *Israel* by a Law, *Deut. xxiii. 7.* that they should not abhor the *Egyptians*, but receive the posterity of that people into their assemblies in the third Generation, as an acknowledgment that their ancestors had sojourned in the land of *Egypt*.

THE Use which we should make of what has been said, is, to be perswaded to acknowledge the divine will, and readily to obey it, whenever it is sufficiently made known to us. And we may be
sure

sure that it is the will of God, that we should amend our sinful lives, and correct any thing in our selves which we find to be contrary to the laws of holiness, justice, and goodness. And whatever helps us to discover such contrariety, may be called the voice of God, whether written in sacred Scripture, or in other good books, or suggested by the dictates of our own Conscience, or inculcated by publick discourses or private admonitions.

We need not be so much concerned from what quarter we hear the voice which warns us to amend our lives, as to be sensible of our want of amendment, and of the danger we run, by persevering in an evil course, of falling into the hands of an angry God. Of which if we are once duly sensible, a very moderate incitement will suffice to stir us up to that work, which we know to be necessary for our preservation.

I allow the dignity and authority of the Speaker ought to have a great influence upon the minds of the hearers. But alas! how common is it for perverse men to deny such authority, and oppose it with endless cavils and contentions. The answer of all irreligious people, whenever they are pressed to a duty which it is against their inclination or interest to perform, is much the same with this of Pharaoh to Moses; *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?* 'How does it appear that he has employed you, and not rather that you use his name to give credit to your own ambitious purposes?' It is well known that such objections as these have broken the force of religion upon the hearts of Sinners in all ages of the World. The first opposition which the Devil made to God's will upon Earth, was to perswade mankind that he had not said that which he had really commanded, or that his words were not to be understood

stood according to their plain meaning. *Hath God said that in the day ye shall eat of this tree; ye shall die? no surely; he knows that by eating of it, ye shall become even as wise as himself.* By which way of reasoning the Tempter would insinuate, either that he who restrained man from so great a benefit, could not be God; or else that they who thought themselves so restrained, did not rightly interpret his words. Such was the Devil's Sophistry; and his instruments use the very same artifice in their disputes. They are bold enough to deny that the sacred Scriptures are the word of God. But if that be too gross to go down with their hearers, then they will wrest them to such a sense, as shall be sure to destroy the true intent and meaning of them. And these two methods are the greatest supports of Atheism and Immorality in the Christian World. For hereby all revelation is set aside. Articles of Faith and Doctrines of a future state are discredited, and the precepts of holy living evervated and stript of all divine authority.

BUT if there be any who cannot be perswaded by historical arguments, that the Pen-men of Holy Writ were inspired by the Spirit of God; yet if they would look within themselves, and compare the exhortations, counsels, and rules of that word, with what they find reasonable and fit to be done, they would in time agree to receive it as very worthy of a divine Author. If *Pharaoh* will not take *Moses* his word for it, that God had sent him to demand the release of his people; yet let him compare his message with the predictions which he had formerly heard, that *Canaan* was designed for the Inheritance of *Israel*: let him recollect the arguments which might induce him to believe that this design was now ripe for execution: Let him consider how agreeable it is to the Laws
of

of hospitality, that a people who had been kindly invited by his Ancestor as friends, to partake of the stores of *Egypt* in a time of famine, and who had done them many years good service for that favour, should now have leave to go and sacrifice to their God, or rather should be fully set at liberty, and even assisted by the *Egyptians* to gain possession of their promised Land: Let *Pharaoh*, I say, or any ingenuous man lay these things together, and whatever he might think of the person and pretensions of *Moses*, he must needs confess that the release of *Israel* at this time was highly agreeable to the will of God, and to the duties of hospitality and humanity which any good-natured people would be ready to pay them.

THIS indeed is the reason why men are so forward to question the truth of divine revelation, and lessen the authority of the Prophets and Apostles; because they have no mind to discharge a good Conscience to God and their Brethren. For if they were resolved to do this, they would not want many arguments to persuade them, that *Moses* and the Prophets were the Messengers of God.

It was a very pertinent question which the young man in the Gospel asked our Lord; *Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?* Though he was not qualified to hear the dictates of this spiritual Master, having a strong bias upon his mind which enclined him to his great estate, yet thus far he is exemplary to us all, that we should propose eternal life as the great end and aim of all our religious enquiries. Whosoever rests in any inferior design, knows nothing of God's word as he ought to know it. He will never be illuminated with the full and true light of it. He studies it for the gratification of his pride, vanity, or some evil affection which he

will find condemned in it, and himself upon that account excluded from the real benefit and comforts of it.

THERE is a great deal in that saying of our Lord: *If any man will do the will of my Father, he shall know whether my doctrine be of God.* For God will not suffer those to mistake the meaning of his word, who peruse it with an honest sincere intention, that they may be faithful doers of it. May he vouchsafe to create in us such honest and upright hearts, as may bring forth the fruits of his holy word unto everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, &c.





SERMON XVI.

On the Sixth Sunday in LENT.

EXODUS x. 1, 2.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: and that thou mayst tell in the ears of thy son and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them, that ye may know how that I am the Lord.

WHEN God instructed Moses how to apply to Pharaoh for the release of Israel, he informed him what sort of a man this King was, one who would turn a deaf ear to his message, and suffer a great deal of the divine Vengeance, before he would comply. *I am sure, says God, he will not let you go, no not by a mighty hand, nor till I have smitten Egypt with many prodigious*

‘Judgments which I will execute in the midst thereof, then at last he will let you go.’

Now tho’ this was warning enough to *Moses* to expect a hard task of this business, and to arm himself with patience to go through it, yet his heart sometimes failed him, and he wanted repeated encouragements from the divine Oracle to support him under it, and carry him to the end of it. The first motion which he made in it, so provoked the King, that he encreased the Peoples burdens upon it. This caused them to murmur against *Moses* and *Aaron*, as the authors of their oppression. At which *Moses* was quite discouraged and disappointed; for he expected that the hardships of his People should have been relieved in some measure, and not aggravated; as appears by his expostulation with God, ch. v. 22. *Lord, says he, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to thy people; neither hast thou delivered them at all.*

HEREUPON God saw it necessary to repeat the substance of what he had told him before. He reminds him of what he had said concerning the hardness of *Pharaoh’s* heart, and how he would endure many Judgments before he would relent. He commands him to go a second time to the People of *Israel*, and renew his Promise to them, that notwithstanding this discouraging beginning, they should quickly see themselves delivered from their *Egyptian* slavery. But the poor Peoples spirits were so deprest and sunk under their sufferings, that they had not Faith to believe it.

Moses having tried and found that words would not prevail upon *Pharaoh*, he is commanded by God to go to him, and demonstrate the truth of his message by miraculous facts. And first he exhibits the innocent miracle of his Rod turned

turned into a serpent, and restored to a Rod again. But this making no due impression upon *Pharaoh*, he proceeds to bring prodigious and publick Judgments upon him and his People. *First*, He turned all their water into blood, so that it was unfit for the use of man, or the nourishment of fish. *2dly*, He caused the waters to breed such innumerable shoals of frogs, that they covered the land, came into the houses, and defiled the vessels of the *Egyptians*. *3dly*, He turned the dust of the earth into lice, which swarmed upon man and beast. *4thly*, He filled the land with flies, which tainted all their provisions. *5thly*, He sent a grievous murrain upon their cattle, which destroyed them. *6thly*, He inflicted boils and blains upon man and beast. *7thly*, He raised such tempests of hail, accompanied with terrible thunder and lightening, as killed man and beast that were abroad in the field, broke the trees, and destroyed the fruits of the earth.

AND now *Moses* seems be astonished, that so many Judgments had been inflicted, and no deliverance wrought by them. For tho' God assured him at the beginning, that he would visit *Egypt* with strange Judgments; yet he did not tell him how many, nor of what sort they should be. So that *Moses* knew not where-about he was in the course of his work. Only we may presume he began to think it was time to have done; and to conclude, that if seven such Plagues as had been inflicted upon *Egypt*, would not move the King to comply with his request, he was certainly inflexible, and that nothing which Heaven and Earth could do farther, would be able to stir him from his present resolution. And he seems to wonder why God will strive any longer with such an incorrigible Man. 'Tis true, he says nothing of all this: but the answer of God in the words of my

Text seems to be framed to such thoughts which *Moses* had in his heart. For he tells him that the continuance of his Judgments was occasioned by the spiritual insatiation of *Pharaoh's* heart, and that the multiplication of them would serve for a good memorial and demonstration of his Power to his People throughout all Generations. *I have hardened Pharaoh's heart,* says God, *that I might shew these my signs before him. And that thou mightest tell thy posterity what things I have wrought in Egypt, that they may know that I am the Lord.*

IN the first clause we have the Reason why God continued his Judgments upon *Pharaoh*, and why he proved so incorrigible under them; *I,* says God, *have hardened his heart.* In the second we have the good End which was served by these Judgments; *they were an undeniable proof that the power which executed them was truly divine.*

And first, WHEN God tells *Moses*, *I have hardened Pharaoh's heart,* 'tis as much as to say, 'Do not wonder that your endeavours and miracles which you have wrought before this man, have had no better effect upon him: do not condemn your self as faulty, weak, or unfortunate upon this account: for I foretold you how obstinate he would prove; and now I tell you farther, that he labours under spiritual as well as temporal Judgments; and that by his manifold defiances of me, he hath made himself the object of my just Vengeance, and is forsaken and repro- bated of God.'

2dly, WHEN God says, *I have hardened Pharaoh's heart;* we must take care that we understand this so, as not to imagine that God can be the author of sin; for this is contrary both to his general Character, and to all his particular Attributes. As God cannot be tempted with evil, so neither tempts he any man. He cannot so far contradict

tradict himself as outwardly to call upon us to do one thing, and inwardly stir up our Wills to do another.

AND therefore those who have considered this case say, that God hardened *Pharaoh's* heart, by depriving him of the light of his Understanding; which certainly he might do with as much justice, as he can take away the bodily sight. He is the Author and Giver of all good Gifts, and may punish us with the loss of inward as well as outward Blessings, whenever we abuse them. In this sense it is that the Scripture says of wicked men in general, God hath stopp'd their ears, blinded their eyes, hardened their hearts, lest they should see and hear and understand so as to be converted and healed. What can sound more like a divine Decree to hinder mens Salvation? And yet it is certain from the very nature of God, and from abundant more passages of his Word, that he never willeth the death of a sinner, but would have all men repent and be saved. But, as I said before, he deprives the unthankful and unholy of inward as well as outward Blessings, and punishes them with spiritual as well as corporal Infirmities. According to the saying of our Lord, that he who uses his Talents, shall find them improve and grow upon his hands; while he who neglects them, loses them and brings them to nothing. By such abuses of their Talents *Pharaoh* and others like him are said to harden their own hearts, and that in the most direct and proper sense of hardening. For we see habitual sinners in a thousand instances, after all that God and man can do for them, or against them, after all the methods of Mercy and Judgment, are as far from reforming their lives, as is the *Ethiopian* from changing his skin, or the Leopard his spots. And yet they have their lucid intervals; they will pray, will lament, will confess

selfs their demerits sometimes, as *Pharaoh* did, *the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat for me this once.* By which they do not intend, any more than he did, to come in generously and freely to the obedience of the divine Will; but only to procure some present remission of their sufferings. Which shews that they have the slavish temper of reprobate Spirits, that they are incapable of ever being the children of God, of being inspired with a filial love and reverence of his divine Majesty.

SUCH Spirits being known to him who is the searcher of hearts, he deals with them according to their constitution; and knowing that they are unqualified for any spiritual Grace, (for I believe there are some Men as incorrigible as Devils, tho' God only can certainly know them) he affords them however the outward means, that he may justify his dealings with them, to all the World; tho' he knows that such means will be so far abused, as to harden them more and more in their sins.

WHICH brings me to offer another way of solving this difficulty in my Text. In order to which, I say, there is a principal and an accidental cause of the sins of men. The principal cause is our own corrupt wills and affections. The accidental is any object or occasion given to draw out our affections into action.

NOW in the commission of Sin, the accidental cause or author is clear of the guilt of it, tho' in scripture style 'tis often spoke of as if it were the principal. I will illustrate this by an instance of Scripture History. It is in 1 *Samuel* xxi. xxii. where we read how *David* flying from *Saul* to *Achish* King of *Gath*, called at *Nob* the City of the Priests, where he was entertained and his wants supplied by *Abimelech* the Chief-Priest.

This

This was observed by *Doeg* an *Edomite*, master of *Saul's* herdsmen, who informed *Saul* of it, who like a jealous tyrant caused the Priests and the whole City of *Nob* to be massacred, as taking part with his enemy: only *Abiathar* escaped, and fled to *David*, and told him what had happened. Whereupon *David* answered, *I knew it that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house.*

Now here every one sees that *Saul* and *Doeg* were the principal and guilty Authors of this Massacre, and *David* only the accidental innocent cause of it: for he had not conspired with *Achimelech* against the Government, nor done any thing which could justly expose him to such a cruel Punishment; yet he calls himself the occasion of it, because it was inflicted upon his account.

Thus in this history of *Pharaoh*, *Moses* puts the accidental Cause for the principal. For when upon his first appearance at Court to procure the release of his People, he found that their burdens were encreased, and their oppression more grievous than ever, he cries out, in his complaint to God of this cross event, *Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people?* Now it was not God, but *Pharaoh* who evil entreated them: but because God's Message to *Pharaoh* was the occasion of this cruel usage, *Moses* mentions it as if it had been the principal cause of it. And so through the whole course of this business; when *Moses* says *Pharaoh* hardened his heart, he speaks properly; when he says God hardned him, he means accidentally. For God's dealings with him were very proper to mollify him and bring him to a compliance; but meeting with such a heart as his, they happened to have a contrary effect upon him. Every Judgment, and every Deliverance from it, would

would have led an ingenuous mind to see the wrath of God for disobedience, and his clemency upon promise of amendment. But this Heart was so proud and audacious, as to contend with the Almighty; it was exasperated with severity, and conceived vain hopes upon the removal of a Judgment, that the hand of God was tired, and would yield to the obstinacy of man. With respect to this perverse temper it was, that God says, I have hardened Pharaoh's heart, meaning by his dealings with him, which were intended to correct and amend him, but by his misapplication of them, they still left him more incorrigible, and finally ended in his utter destruction.

But the Pharaoh and the Egyptians misapplied God's Judgments, yet they were not lost to the World; they are appointed to be recorded and taught as a standing doctrine in Israel, throughout all generations. Thou shalt tell, says God, in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them: that ye may know how that I am the Lord. This was the good end which was served by these Judgments, they were an undeniable proof that the Power which executed them was truly divine. Which was the second thing to be observed from the words of my Text.

ACCORDINGLY the mention of these Judgments occurs very frequently in the sacred writings. Ye have seen, says God, Exod. xix. what I did unto the Egyptians. And in the next chapter, at the delivery of the Law from mount Sinai, he who formerly had styled himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, now proclaims himself the God who brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. In memory of this, the beginning of the year was altered, and the Passover instituted. It was to be a part of their

their yearly thanksgiving, when they offered the basket of first-fruits to God, and there is a particular form for it, Deut. xxvi. — When Israel revolted from God to the worship of Idols, and he expostulated with them for so doing, the expostulation begun with mention of what he had done for them in Egypt, Judg. vi. By which he upbraided them with two crimes: 1st, With Infidelity, in departing from the living God, who had so signally confounded the Idols of Egypt. 2^{dly}, With Ingratitude, in forsaking their best Benefactor for the service of those lying vanities, who never did nor could do them any real kindness. And I might add, that this history condemned them of monstrous Infatuation, who would seek their protection from helpless Idols, when they knew what the Egyptians had suffered for their adherence to them. Upon all these accounts they were extremely culpable, as their holy Prophets confess, and their history abundantly shews. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, says the Psalmist, neither remembered they the multitude of thy mercies. I speak to your fathers, says God by Ezekiel, chap. xx. saying, Defile not your selves with the idols of Egypt: but they would not hearken to me.

SUCH unhappy errors God foresaw would be the sins of his People. And therefore in order to prevent them, he enjoins Israel by the law of my Text, diligently to teach their Posterity what he was now doing for them. This Law is largely repeated and enforced, Deut. vi. 20. When thy son, says he, asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say to thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. And the Lord shewed signs and wonders great and sore upon Egypt, upon Pha-
raoh

reah and all his household, before our eyes. And he brought us out from thence, to the land which he swore to our fathers. And commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good, always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

Thus we begin to apprehend the Extent of God's design in his dealings with the People of *Israel*. He did not send them into *Egypt* barely for their relief in a time of dearth, nor bring them out of it again with such terrible Judgments, only to punish the *Egyptians* for oppressing and detaining them. For he could have relieved them in a famine without sending them thither, and he could have brought them out without inflicting such Judgments on their oppressors. But he did all this that he might be exalted among the Heathen, and that the idolatrous World might know that he is God.

In the days of *Abraham* the Church of the true God was confined to the narrow limits of his Family, and was propagated no farther than the branches of it; with whom it was in a manner buried, during their sojourning in *Egypt*. This opportunity was taken by the reprobate Spirits to make themselves the Idols of mankind, and to usurp the dominion of this World to themselves. At last it was necessary for the supreme Lord and only true God to arise, and magnifie his Omnipotence to the confusion of these usurping Idols. And what scene so proper for the display of his triumphs over them, as the land of *Egypt*, the great University of the World, flourishing in the studies of wisdom, and particularly famous for its Deities and Magicians. For the Majesty of Heaven to conquer these powers, was in effect to conquer all the World. And it was enough for him to say, as he does, *I will execute judgments upon all*
the

the gods of Egypt: *I am the Lord.* In this God sufficiently demonstrated himself to be above all gods.

Thus we discover, in some measure, the Extent of God's design in these dispensations. But we do not see his full intent and meaning, till we find these types verified in the life of every true candidate of the heavenly *Canaan*; who by nature is in a state of bondage and slavery to that ghastly *Pharaoh*, the great oppressor of all God's children, and cannot rescue himself, but must depend upon the mighty arm of God for his deliverance. And when he is delivered from his Task-masters, who led him captive to do evil, when he marches under the shadow of the Most High, like *Israel* in the Wilderness, he must still expect much opposition, he must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.

This is but a hint of a parallel between the Letter and the Spirit, the Law and the Gospel. But he will be able to compleat it for himself, who diligently practises the rule of my Text, and delights to acquaint himself and his family with the wonderful Works of God recorded in both Testaments. For in both he will find that it is the same God, who having spoken to the Fathers by *Moses* and the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son. It is he that said, *Search the Scriptures*, (he meant those of the Old Testament, the New not being then written) *for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and these are they that testify of me.* And, *If ye believe Moses, ye will believe me; for he wrote of me.* It is his Apostle that said, *Whatsoever things were written afore-time, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.* From hence we learn, that this God who delivered his People out of *Egypt*, is our God for ever and ever, and hath the same fatherly affection for us, the same mighty

mighty Arm to protect us, the same superiority over all our enemies ghostly and bodily.

How mightily should it comfort and rejoyce our hearts to hear this gracious Lord and Saviour speaking to us in his blessed Word, in the multitude of precious Promises, of heavenly Precepts, of true Narratives and Examples how he hath visited and redeemed his People of old, and what a very present help he is to all those who put their trust in him!

LET us delight to celebrate the Praises of this God, to speak of all his marvellous Works, to fill all that are about us with worthy notions and impressions of his Majesty, that they may have a lively sense of his Power and Presence in the government of the World, and live under an awful regard of his Omniscience, that he hears and sees every thing that is said and done amongst us, and knows the very thoughts and meditations of our hearts.

LET us open our mouths, and declare the things of God, such as we have heard and seen our selves, and such as our fathers have told us. Let us not hide them from the children of the generations to come; but shew forth the honour of the Lord, his mighty and wonderful Works, that he hath done. That they may teach them to the children which are yet unborn, and that they may shew their children the same: To the intent that they may all keep the Covenant of God, and walk in the way of his Commandments.

IF the knowledge of God were but inculcated according to what he commands in the words of my Text, and as his Saints and Servants of old have been careful to make him known, how great would his name be upon earth? His Majesty would be even visible to men; and all prophaneness, infidelity, and blasphemy would vanish,
and

and like Pharaoh and his Magicians, be quickly confounded and brought to nothing.

THE Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hid in a field. That Field is the Church, and that Treasure is the Word of God; which whose discovers by a diligent perusal, will find it, with the holy Psalmist, far dearer to him than thousands of gold and silver. May we so hear, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this Word, that by patience and comfort of it we may embrace and ever hold fast that blessed hope of everlasting life which is given us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory world without end.

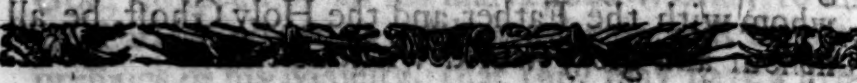


SERMON



SERMON XVII.

On EASTER Sunday.



EXODUS xiv. 30, 31.

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians: and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses.

MARVELLOUS was the deliverance of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, and the divine power was very visible in conducting them and making a way for their escape. For besides that from twenty years old and upwards, they numbered six hundred thousand men, their women and children, and mixt multitude, must be supposed to make above twice this number; and they had many flocks and herds; all which put together, must needs be a dead weight upon a people in their march; in which it concerned them to be expeditious. For though the *Egyptians* were lately glad to be rid of them,

5

them, yet when they considered that they had parted with so many servants and cattle which they esteemed as their own, besides many valuable things which they had lent them, they repented of what they had done; and in a few days time they mustered a formidable Army, consisting of six hundred of their best chariots, says the Sacred Text, with fifty thousand horse, and two hundred thousand foot, as *Josephus* affirms, and quickly overtook the flying, or rather the slow-paced and much-dispirited *Israelites*.

It is said indeed, *Exod. xii. 51.* that God brought the children of *Israel* out of *Egypt* by their armies; and chap. *xiii. 18.* that they were harnessed: whence some may think they were well prepared for war. But the *Hebrew* word means no more than that they marched in good order: and it is against reason to think that their oppressors would permit them to keep such arms as might have enabled them to fight for their liberty. Besides, it is expressly affirmed that they were all foot-men, and consequently had nothing to answer the chariots and horses of their pursuers. And it farther appears that they were unfit for war, because it is said, God led them not through the land of the *Philistines*, though that was nearest to *Canaan*, for this very reason, lest they should be molested with wars, and discouraged, and so return again to *Egypt*.

THEIR great security was, the Presence and Power of the divine Majesty, which appeared over their Camp at their first setting out, and directed their course and stations, moving when they were to march, and standing still when they were to rest. This appearance is described, *Exod. xiii. 21, 22.* *The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light to go by day and*

night. He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, through the whole course of their travels, till they came to pass over *Jordan* into the land of *Canaan*. This manner of the divine conduct is celebrated in many places of Holy Scripture.

By this supernatural direction God led his people, not the shortest and readiest way from *Egypt* to *Canaan*; for then they must have gone a midland road, leaving the red sea on the right hand, and the mediterranean on the left, the same way that their Ancestors came down into *Egypt*. But because this road was much inhabited by *Philistines* and others who would have opposed their passage, and because God had decreed to give them his Law, for the government of their Church and Nation, and to accustom them to the observance of it a good while before they entred into the promised land; therefore the signal of his presence carried them a very different way, into the wilderness of *Etham*, which lay upon the red sea, or gulf of *Arabia*, eastward from *Ramesse*s and *Succoth*, from whence they set out.

AND here it may be noted, that whereas the *Israelites* at first petitioned only for three days to go and sacrifice in the Wilderness, though the *Egyptians* at last were content to release them for ever; it is probable that the King and his Counsellors resolving to fetch them again, concluded that they had satisfied the divine command, by giving them leave to be gone three days; and that when those days were ended they thought they were at liberty to reclaim them.

THEY likewise flattered themselves that Heaven declared in their favour, by leading the *Israelites* into a Wilderness where they were entangled, and so bounded by the sea on one hand, and mountains and narrow passages on the other, that if they pursued

pursued them vigorously, they should quickly reduce them. And humanly speaking they reckoned very right; for nothing less than a Divine Power could extricate them. Accordingly they pursued, and overtook them encamping by the sea, on the side of *Pibakiroth*, before *Baal-zephon*. This they interpreted as a lucky omen: For the mountain of *Baal-zephon* was so denominated from an Idol erected on the top of it, whom they called; The Lord of the *Watch*: For the *Egyptians* believed, or at least made their slaves believe, that if any of them offered to escape that way into *Arabia*, this Idol would arrest them, and force them to return to their Lords and Masters. And *Pharaoh* might probably animate his Soldiers with an assurance of victory, by telling them, that their God had delivered their Enemies into their hand.

ON the twentieth day of *Nisan*, which was about this time of the year, and five days after *Israel's* departure from *Ramesses*, the *Egyptian* army came within sight of them, and drew out and extended themselves so far, as made it impossible for the *Israelites*, by any skill or power of their own, to escape them. For they had no passage before them, nor any trained Soldiers, chariots or horsemen, to remove their Enemies in the rear. So that nothing but immediate destruction was presented to their eyes.

THIS filled their Camp with terror, and the lamentations of the women and children so astonished the men, that they forgot the wonderful works which God had lately wrought for their deliverance, and his guidance of them to this very place by the signal of his own presence, and for this very purpose, that he might triumph over the confident *Egyptians*, by fighting against them in the defence of his people. But they were so con-

founded with their present circumstances, that they did nothing but murmur at *Moses* for bringing them out of *Egypt*, and thought of nothing but surrendering themselves with all humble submission to their old oppressors.

HEREUPON *Moses* put them in mind, how God had undertaken to work out their deliverance; which they were not to expect either from themselves, or from any human assistance: That they would not be put to fight the *Egyptians*; nor so much as to draw a sword, or shoot an arrow at them: They had nothing to do but stand still, and see the Salvation of the Lord, who delights to magnifie his power and providence in rescuing his servants out of the most pressing extremities; and that not one of the numerous host of the *Egyptians*, which they so much dreaded, should remain alive after that day. Having said this, he put up a short prayer to God, imploring his speedy assistance and counsel to direct them what to do in this great distress. God answered him immediately, that he should command the people to march forward to the sea-side; and assure them that they should find the waters open to them, and give them a safe and dry passage: *And I, says God, will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them; and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh and upon all his host, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen, and they shall know that I am the Lord.* This oracle *Moses* no doubt communicated to the people to raise their Spirits. And for their farther encouragement, a favourable prodigy happened in their Camp before their eyes. For the pillar of cloud and of fire which was hitherto in their front, removed, and came about into their rear, so as to stand between the two Camps of the *Egyptians* and *Israelites*: the dark side being turned to the former, and the bright to the latter,

in

in order to keep them asunder, as it did: for by reason of this interposition, the *Egyptians* could not overtake the *Israelites* all the ensuing night.

In the Evening, when *Moses* came to the red-sea, he lifted up his Rod over it, as God had commanded him: And as he had formerly wrought many miracles by the use of this Rod, so now a supernatural effect presently followed upon it: For the waters of the sea divided, and retired to the right and left, rising and standing up like a wall on each hand, and leaving a way in the bottom wide enough to receive a large front of the host of *Israel*. Some of the *Jewish* Doctors have entertained an opinion that there were twelve distinct paths, one for every Tribe to march in. But though there is no need to conceive so many several divisions, yet it is certain that the passage was very broad: for they entered not till late at night, and were got through (at least the greatest part of them) early next morning: which had been impossible for so great a multitude of people and cattle, had there not been a great deal of room for a speedy march. To facilitate which, God raised a strong East wind, says our Bible; but the LXX better render it, a South wind, which served not only to keep the passage open, and to dry the ground, but being in the backs of the Travellers, helped to push them forward; whereas an East wind would have been too much in their faces, and have rendered their march slow and toilsome.

Now though the *Egyptians* were hindered, both by the pillar of cloud, and darkness of the night, from coming up with the *Israelites*, yet they perceived what course they took. They saw the waters of the sea were retired, and gave them passage, which they might impute to the high winds and some extraordinary ebb. However be-

ing eager in their pursuit, and not doubting but they should overtake them next morning, they ventured in after them, and proceeded till their whole army was got far into the bounds of the sea. And early in the morning God looked upon them through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled them, and took off their chariot wheels: i.e. he turned the fiery part of the pillar towards them, which affrighted them as the face of an angry God. And this appearance being accompanied (as Josephus says) with a tempest of thunder and lightning, their horses were startled, and the ground under them growing deep and clammy with the rain, caused their chariots to move heavily.

At the same time God commanded Moses to stretch out his Rod over the sea, in order to reduce the waters to their natural state. Which done, and the Egyptians perceiving them to flow, they strove against them for a while, but being too far from land, they were finally overwhelmed, and every man of them drowned, not one escaped.

THUS the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses.

It is much questioned, both by Jewish and Christian Doctors, whether the Israelites crossed over to the opposite shore of this sea, or whether they only fetched a compass, and came out again on the same side. Those who are of this latter opinion, give this account of it, That the ledge of mountains which stopped up their passage by land, running into the sea, they circuted about the end of this bay, and came to land again when they were got beyond it. That the breadth of this Gulf being fifty or threescore English miles, they

they could not possibly cross it in so short a time as they were in passing, which seems to have been not above seven or eight hours; and that if they had gone over to the *Arabian* side, they must have come back again to have pursued their journey towards *Canaan*. Lastly, that *Num. xxxiii. 8. Moses* represents them, after their deliverance, to be in the Wilderness of *Etham*, where they were before. On the other hand, those who hold that they went directly over, say, that the place of their passage was near the point or extremity of this Gulf, between *Toro* and *Suez*, where it is not above four miles broad. If this be true, they might easily cross it in one night, and neither be out of their way, nor out of the Wilderness of *Etham*, which might be so called on both sides this sea, in so narrow a place of it.

THE fame of this deliverance was spread abroad among the heathen, as we read in several places of Holy Scripture, and in other authors. And the Application which *St. Paul* and the Fathers of our Church have made of it, shews, that they understood it to be a type of our Christian Baptism, and consequently of our Resurrection and immortal life in the Kingdom of God. And this is the reason why it is appointed to be read in the Church at this time. It contains in it the mysteries of our Regeneration to a state of Grace here, and of our passage through the Grave to the glorious Inheritance of our heavenly *Canaan*.

By the condition of our nature we are born into this World more wretched slaves than *Israel* in *Egypt*. The reprobate Spirits are our task-masters, the calamities of life are our burdens, and we are tied and bound with the chains of our own corrupt affections.

In order to rescue us from this thralldom, we have a greater than *Moses*, even the Son of God,

to lead us, we have his holy Spirit in the use of his Sacraments to regenerate us, and the light of his Gospel is our pillar of fire to guide and direct us in the way of Salvation.

BUT this Salvation cannot be compleated, till we are passed out of this into another World; between which there is a great Gulf, which might justly terrifie us, for we should perish in it, had not the Captain of our Salvation made it a safe passage for us.

FOR by a more powerful Instrument than Moses's Rod, even by his Cross, he hath opened a way, and made our Grave the Gate of Eternal Life, through which these *Egyptians*, these Evils which now pursue us, shall not be able to follow us; they shall be all swallowed up and buried in this Gulf; *hitherto shall they come, and no farther.*

THIS is all exhibited to us, not only in this type of *Israel's* passage through the red-sea, but by the well-attested Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Attested by Angels, by Apostles and Evangelists, by St. Paul and others who were once Enemies to it; by an infinite number of miracles wrought in the faith of it, particularly by the Resurrections of others, which were, as I may say, the broad Seal of Heaven, confirming the truth of this great Article of our Religion, *that Christ is risen from the dead.* In this we are happier than *Israel* at their coming out of *Egypt*: for though they had general promises from God that he would deliver them; yet they did not see the way how he would do it; that was entirely new to them. When they were distressed by the sea, and unpassable rocky mountains in their front, and the *Egyptian* army in their rear; when they were even ready to plunge into the waters, rather than be exposed to the swords of their Enemies; then, and not before, it was revealed to them, that

that those waters should become propitious, and open a way for their escape. They were put into a grievous consternation, before they saw any overture of their deliverance.

BUT the Son of God, who leads us through the waves of this troublesome World, is gone through them before us, and safely arrived on the Canaan-side of this sea; whence he shews himself to us, and calls out in the words of *Isaiah*, saying, *Fear not; for I have redeemed thee: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.* He tells us, 'This body I have taken for your sakes. In it I have suffered all the hardships incident to human nature; I have given it up to scourging and crucifixion, to death and the grave; and I have raised it again, and crowned it with a glorious immortality, to give you an assurance, by what you see done in my own person, that I am able to save you in as ample a manner as I have promised. I have instructed you not to labour for the meat which perisheth, but for that which nourisheth to everlasting life: not to fear men who can kill the body, but God alone, who can cast both Soul and Body into hell. I have told you, that I am the Resurrection and the Life, and that I will call you out of your Graves at the last day, and own you for my Brethren before Angels and men, and carry you to the Kingdom which I have prepared for you, where you shall for ever live with me, and all your Enemies shall be put under your feet. And now you see that I am able thus highly to exalt you, inasmuch as I have done it to your nature in my own person. Fear not therefore to lye down and sleep a while in the dust: for be assured, that in keeping my commandments you shall triumph over death' and

and the grave, and be raised again to everlasting Life.

THIS is briefly the substance of what our blessed Saviour has said and done, to fortifie us against the fears of death, and to teach us, that while we follow him, we are getting from under the tyranny of our spiritual Task-masters, the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and making our way towards a Kingdom, where no evil can approach us. And that though this way lyes through many waters of affliction, yet it is safe and sure, and the end of it will be life from the dead.

THE consideration of what has been said, should fill our hearts with a love and reverence of the Divine Majesty, a pious regard for his word, and a grateful sense of his infinite goodness. When *Israel* had escaped the danger of the sea, and saw their mortal Enemies the *Egyptians* dead upon the shore, it is affirmed in my Text, that *they feared the Lord, and believed him, and his servant Moses*: and the next Chapter presents us with their Psalm of praise and thanksgiving for this deliverance: And shall not our Lord's Resurrection, which necessarily infers our own, as I have proved before, shall it not be much more productive of these Graces in our Souls? Let us but heartily believe this Resurrection, and I cannot see how it is possible for us to speak irreverently of Christ, or lightly to esteem the Evangelists and Apostles, who do not barely teach it, but lay the whole stress of our Christian Faith upon the certainty of it. *If Christ be not risen, says St. Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xv. your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.*

THIS is the reason why the Enemies of our Religion imploy all their engines to ruin this foundation and pillar of our Faith; as well knowing, that if they can but make us infidels in this point,

point, they totally spoil us of our Christianity; at best they will leave us but the shadow of it, without the substance. But see what melancholick wretches these are, who can with that the light of the Gospel were turned into darkness. *They love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* By their fruits we may know them. They are all such as neglect and despise the mysteries of our Religion. For whosoever believes that Christ is risen from the dead, will not fail to honour his holy name and his word, and to render him that service which he requires of all true Christians.

1stly, This ought to fill our hearts with the praises of God, and a thankful remembrance of all his benefits. Did *Israel* praise him for their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and is he not much more to be magnified and exalted for rescuing us from the slavery of Sin and Satan, into the glorious liberty of the children of God? Were they so sensible of the happiness of their escape from those who could only kill the body, and shall not we celebrate him who hath redeemed us from such Enemies, as would ruin us Soul and Body to all Eternity? They escaped the *Egyptians* and the sea: we are ransomed from death and hell. They were under the ministry of *Moses*: we under the conduct and protection of the Son of God. *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the Feast.* It is by virtue of the blood of this Lamb, without spot or blemish, that we are protected from the sword of the destroying Angel. It is he that hath made a way through the sea, and a path through the deep waters of this mortal state, and turned our grave into a door of hope, an entrance into that heavenly Kingdom which he hath opened to all believers.

He is the Lord our strength and our song, and he is become our Salvation. He is our God, and the

the God of our Fathers, we will exalt him. His right hand is become glorious in power, he hath dashed our Enemies to pieces. In the greatness of his excellency he hath overthrown them that rose up against us: he sent forth his wrath and consumed them as stubble. Who is like unto our Lord among the Gods! who is like him! glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! In mercy he will lead forth his redeemed out of the Grave; he will guide them in his strength to his holy habitation. He shall bring them in and plant them in the mountain of his Inheritance, in the place which he hath made for them to dwell in, in the Sanctuary which his hands have established. And there shall they be with the Lord for ever and ever. To him with the Father, &c.



SERMON



SERMON XVIII.

On the First Sunday after EASTER.



NUMBERS xxii. 18.

And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.

TH the King of Moab had known the mind of God, and his injunction to Israel in favour of the Moabites, as it is recited in *Deut. ii. 9.* he would not have been so alarmed at the Israelites army, when they came upon his borders. For there they are forbidden to molest the Moabites or Ammonites, or to offer to dispossess them of their Countries, in consideration no doubt of their kindred to Israel, being descended from Lot, the nephew of Abraham by his brother Haran. This injunction they obeyed, as we read *Judg. xi. 2 Chron. xx.* And this King might easily have understood their resolution to observe it, had he acted ingenuously, and

233 SERMON XVIII. On the

and treated them with that friendship and hospitality which became a kinsman. But instead of that, he entertained suspicious and odious apprehensions of them, and solicited the powers of Earth and Hell to bring them to destruction. First he confederated with the *Midianites* against them; then he had recourse to the magick arts of *Balaam*, a famous Sorcerer, to bewitch and infatuate them with his enchantments. To him he sends an embassy of *Moabites* and *Midianites*, persons of good rank and reputation, with a handsome present, and a high compliment to this false Prophet, that he had the power of life and death in his own hands. *I am perswaded*, said the King, *that he whom thou blestest, is blessed; and he whom thou curstest, is cursed.*

THESE arguments failed not to work upon *Balaam's* ambition and avarice; so that he resolved to do his utmost in what was required, and presently he consulted his oracle concerning the journey and business which he was about to undertake. Whether upon this occasion he invocated the true God, or an evil spirit, I cannot certainly determine. You hear in my Text how he calls the God of *Israel*, *the Lord my God*. Whence learned men suppose, that *Balaam* was once a holy man; but that he degenerated, and corrupted religion with the evil arts of divination and soothsaying. But whoever he invocated, this is certain, that God silenced his familiar spirits, and answered himself. And his answer at this time was in the negative. *Thou shalt not go with these men; thou shalt not curse this people, for they are blessed.*

IN reporting God's answer to the messengers of *Balak*, *Balaam* suppress part of it. *The Lord*, says he, *refuseth to let me go with you.* But he did not tell them that God's reason was, because he had blessed *Israel*. And they, when they came to their

their master, were as partial in reporting *Balaam's* answer to them. *Balaam*, said they, *refuseth to come with us*: but they did not tell him how God had forbidden him: that they concealed and kept to themselves.

This misled the King to think that the Prophet only wanted a stronger invitation to bring him. Whereupon he sent him a richer present, by the hands of more honourable persons, with a promise of high preferment, even the highest that he could give, or the other could ask. To this message *Balaam* answers in the words of my Text: *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.*

IN which words we may see the divine Omnipotency, and the subjection of all other powers to God. Which is the best reason in the World, why we should have none other Gods but one, and the best argument to perswade us to love, honour, and fear him above all things, and in all injurious attempts which men and devils shall make against us, to put our trust in God.

1st, *BALAM* confesses the divine Omnipotency, which forcibly restrained him from cursing *Israel*: *I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more.* This sounds like the resolution of a pious man, whose answer to any sinful temptation is, *I cannot*, i. e. *I must not*, *I will not* do this. For tho' he has the natural faculties of speaking and acting, yet he holds himself sufficiently restrained from using them, in all cases which are contrary to the Will and Commandment of God. His Laws are the measure of such a man's Power, who can act only according to the truth of God, and do nothing against it.

ON the contrary, wicked men set no such bounds to their words and actions, but yield their members

members instruments of unrighteousness and unholiness. They make no more account of the divine Laws, than if they were so many spiders webbs, but abandon themselves to the sway of their own carnal wills and affections. They are of the number of those who say, 'Our tongues, and hands and estates are our own, we will say and do what we please; who shall controul us?' They will seek to turn the unchangeable God from his own purposes, and importune him to grant them their own sinful desires, and put such a construction upon his words as will render them favourable to their own designs. Such men as these the Scripture calls, *Sons of Belial*, men of unbounded licence and latitude, who live by no Law but that of their own Will, and have no more Religion but what will comply with their self-love.

SUCH a man was *Balaam*, who by his answer here in my Text seems to be pious, and endued with the fear of God, and yet he was far from it. For when he says he could not go beyond the word of the Lord, he means that his tongue was forcibly restrained from cursing *Israel*, as I noted before, and as his following words and carriage fully declare. For he presently invites these second messengers to tarry all night with him, that they might hear the result of his farther application to God about their business. Which sufficiently proves that he had a base wicked heart. For to ask God's permission to curse *Israel*, when he had been told before, that he should not curse them, for they were blessed, was a gross breach of the laws of Piety and Charity. And yet he laboured to the very end of his life to do them this injury; so little regard had he to the Will of God, or the welfare of mankind.

BUT what if *Balaam* had been so much master of his own tongue, as to have pronounced a curse upon *Israel*, should they have fared ever the worse for his imprecations? No certainly; not so long as they pleased God, and did nothing to forfeit his blessing and protection. It is well known indeed, that God often permits wicked Men and Devils to injure his best Servants in their body, estate, and reputation, of which we have a famous instance in the history of holy *Job*. And that witchcrafts are practised in the World, and have had malignant influences, hath been proved to a demonstration, so often as that none will deny it, except a sort of People who will not believe their own senses. But it is as certain, that God commonly protects his Servants from suffering any harm by the curses of Satan's instruments, according to the testimony of his own Word, which assures us, that unmerited curses shall not be inflicted on those against whom they are uttered. For if they were, the plagues and mischiefs which are daily imprecated by millions of hellish tongues, would soon bring the World to utter destruction.

WE conclude therefore that *Balaam's* Curse, if it had been pronounced, should not have prevailed against God's Blessing. However, God would not suffer him to pronounce it, to the end that all the World might take notice of his sovereignty over all creatures, and that whenever he pleases, he obliges all things, even the tongues and works of his most violent enemies, to speak his praise. For this purpose he wrought his wonders in *Egypt*, in the Red-sea, and in the Wilderness, to make his name great among the *Gentiles*, that they might be reclaimed from their Idolatry, or left inexcusable in the practice of it, when they saw how much the God of *Israel* was above all their

gods: that he only was Almighty, that his Command prevailed over all, and nothing was able to resist or contradict it. A noble Evidence of this truth stands here before us. The King acknowledges his Soothsayer to have the gift of doing all that was possible to be done by blessing and cursing; and the Soothsayer assures the King, that he was not able to bless or curse, otherwise than as the God of *Israel* was pleased to permit him. Which concludes as strongly as can be, that this God was superior to the Soothsayer, and to all the infernal powers which assisted him.

THIS conclusion may serve as a perpetual fountain of comfort to all God's People, a cordial in all their afflictions, an argument of faith, hope, and trust in God, when they consider that they are children of such a Father, servants of such a Lord, as is the great Monarch and Emperor of the Universe, whose power is in himself, who wants none to assist him, for all things obey him, being created and supported by him, who orders all things with a nod and a word. And tho' some of his creatures have rebelled against him, yet that is no argument of any defect, weakness, or iniquity in the Lord, but only of degeneracy and blindness in the rebellious servants. It being known and approved by the best experience, that they who study the nature of the divine Majesty, and most frequently approach him in spiritual Communion, who are most observant of his Laws, and careful to conform themselves to the pattern of his holiness and goodness, have the greatest love, esteem, and veneration for him, and are most apt to induce others to love him, by recommending his excellent and gracious properties in their own life and practice: whereas those who have rebelled against him, have been strangers to him; their disaffection is founded in ignorance,

III. and

and their ignorance has grown from omissions of those duties which were appointed to keep up a lively sense of God upon their minds.

THIS is visibly the cause of Atheism in our own World, this neglect in Men to acquaint themselves with God by the use of those means which he hath prescribed for this purpose. And if we knew the state of the World of Spirits as well as our own, we should certainly find the like neglects to have been the occasion of their ignorance of God; and their ignorance to have been the cause of their fall and apostasie from him.

WE must have a care what opinion we entertain of the condition of those which were once holy Angels, but are now reprobate Spirits. We are apt to conceive of them as living in the Presence of God, seeing the glories of his Majesty, knowing the excellencies of his nature, and readily performing the duties of their several stations; and so no doubt they did at the beginning. But afterwards, by their neglects of such duties, they became more alienated and removed from the divine Presence, and more insensible of his glorious and excellent Attributes. For I am perswaded they did not fall suddenly, but gradually, in proportion to their neglects of the service of their heavenly Lord and Father. And I believe of the Angels of Heaven in general, that by exercising their duties towards God, they improve in their love and knowledge of him, as much as we men do upon earth; and under such improvement, it is impossible for them to fall: therefore these that fell must abate in their service of God, and consequently in their love and knowledge of him; and so grew ignorant of him, or in other words, laboured under a dismal eclipse of his divine Excellencies. Which so long as they are apprehended by any creature of God, it is impossible for him

to sink in his esteem of the Being in whom they reside, and from whence they flow. For it being impossible for the Creator to degenerate, the degeneracy which causes this change must be in the creature; which is the point which I at first asserted.

And therefore, *Secondly*, THE unchangeable sufficiency and readiness of God to save us, is our best, and indeed our only security against the legions of wicked men and devils which surround us, and are ready to devour us. For by his Omniscience he sees all their designs, and by his Omnipotence he controuls them at pleasure. And it is his pleasure many times to deliver his Servants from the rage of the ungodly, so that they cannot open their mouths nor lift up their hands against them. And when for wise and good reasons, which I cannot now stand to enumerate, he permits the enemy and avenger to chastise his People, this should only drive them nearer to God, with the greater zeal to implore his favour and protection, since in all circumstances it is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in men, it is better to fall into his hands who spares when we deserve punishment, and in the midst of judgment remembers mercy, than to become a prey to inexorable Spirits whose tender mercies are cruel. If God be on our side, we need not fear what they can do against us: for they can do no more than what our Protector sees fit, and that will be no more than what shall redound to our benefit in the end, so long as we study to serve and please God.

ACCORDINGLY we find that *David* and other holy Men, when they had suffered much from the rage of Satan and his Instruments, humbly confess that they were delivered up to such sufferings for the punishment of their sins,
because

because they had not kept God's Laws so well as they should have done. They thank him for his corrections, whereby they were reclaimed to a better course of life, and they exhort others upon such occasions to be assured, and trust their experience for it, that God is the most vigilant Keeper, and most gracious Governour and Preserver of mankind.

AND the Almighty was pleased to justify his dealings with his People in later times, by putting them in mind of this very dispensation here before us. *Micah vi. 5.* O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him — that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. 'Remember how I would not suffer Balaam to utter imprecations, nor practise enchantments against you, tho' he endeavoured all he could to curse you, but I turned his curse into a blessing. Consider this, and see how righteous I have been, and true to the Covenant which I made with your Fathers: how punctually I fulfilled my Promises to them, in bringing them into the land wherein ye now dwell, notwithstanding all those impediments which stood in their way, partly from the opposition of their enemies, and partly from their own sins.' Such remembrances are very proper to give us a right notion of God and of our selves, to let us see his infinite Wisdom, Power and Goodwill to save us, and our own continual want of such a Saviour.

THE King of Moab was a man of a dark genius, and betook himself to impious means to ward off the danger which he apprehended from Israel. Had he dealt openly and candidly in this business, he had saved a great deal of honour, treasure, and pains, which were all thrown away upon a base and ill-concerted project. To hire

the legions of darkness for his confederates, was fouler dealing, than to shoot poisoned arrows in a battle. But the righteous God blatted this conspiracy, and it ended in the shame and confusion of the Projectors. The watchman of *Israel* had his eye upon them, and discovered them, and defeated their counsels.

THIS should be a warning to us all, never to pursue any end by unrighteous means. A good man will not transgress the laws of Piety and Justice, tho' it were to save his life, and every thing that is dear to him in this World: he will not treat any man as his enemy upon meer suspicions and jealousies, as *Balak* treated the People of *Israel*: Much less will he make a league with hell, as this King did, and apply to Sorcerers and Enchanters for his deliverance. It is amazing to think how any man can be so infatuated as to hope for good from those infernal Spirits, who are implacable enemies to all Mankind, and if at any time they seem to do them service, have no other design in it, but to impose upon them, and ruin them to all eternity. Tho' we need not look so far forward, for we commonly see their votaries reduced in this World to the greatest misery, and that by the just Judgment of God, who is the fountain of all goodness, and will not endure the reprobate Spirits to rob him of this honour, but sooner or later will convince all the World, that *they who trust in lying vanities, forsake their own mercies.*

INNUMERABLE are the Scriptures which teach this doctrine, and the experience which we have of God's governing the World doth abundantly confirm the truth of it. And we have moreover another sort of unexceptionable Evidence, such confessions I mean, as this in my Text, to assure us, that God reigneth over all, and that

First Sunday after EASTER. 2 231.

no created powers, visible or invisible, can act beyond the limits which he assigns them. *I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more.*

AND this suggests another observation which I cannot omit in this place, viz. the obstinacy of *Balaam* and such like wicked men, that when they know the mind of God, as he did, yet they will not obey it without compulsion, but still seek to go their own way, and do their own pleasure. *Balaam* knew very well by divine Revelation, that it was the Will of God, that *Israel* should be blessed, notwithstanding which, he used all possible endeavours to curse them. And just so the men of the World persist in the gratification of their sinful lusts, against all the checks which they receive from the Word of God, the preaching of his Ministers, and the remonstrances of their own Conscience. So that however they may confess God in their words, and in some of their works too, yet in cases where their favourite lusts are concerned, they deny him, and depose him, as far as in them lies, from having any dominion or authority over them, yielding obedience to no Law but that of their own corrupt affections. But to proceed.

It must needs be a great comfort to the poor Servants of God, to hear this Diviner say, *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I can do no more for him, than God shall permit me to do.* This is a fair confession of *Israel's* enemy, that all the power, authority, and riches in the World cannot hurt those whom God hath undertaken to protect. Thus afterwards, in the days of *Jebo-shaphat* King of *Judah*, when the posterity of these very *Moabites* and *Ammonites* invaded his Kingdom with a great army, and he besought God, saying, *Behold the children of Ammon, and Moab, and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade,*

when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not. Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O God, we have no might against this great company, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. Then God answered him by Jahaziel the Prophet, saying, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's. And he was pleased to grant them a signal victory, 2 Chron. xx. And thus again, 2 Chron. xxxii. when Sennacherib invaded Judah, Hezekiah spake comfortably to his People, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there are more with us, than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles for us.

THESE good Kings had a true faith in God, and a right sense of his Power, that having him on their side, they had nothing to fear from the multitudes of their enemies. And this their Piety availed more to the subduing of their enemies, than if they had assaulted them with superior arms and forces. By the same Faith their Ancestor David slew the Philistines champion, and routed their army, with much the same words in his mouth, *The battle is the Lord's, who saveth not by sword nor spear: he will give you into our hands.* Such victories were the rewards of their Leaders Faith and Piety. But to return.

A house full of silver and gold, says Balaam, cannot make me go beyond the word of the Lord. He means in point of ability, not of will, as I noted at first. For a much less sum excited his zeal to do all he could both against Israel, and against the express Command of God. And I wish he had been the

First Sunday after EASTER. 333

the first and last Prophet, that was retained by the wages of unrighteousness in a wrong cause. But alas! his successors have been very numerous, and may be heard of in all Histories, particularly in many places of sacred Writ; where we are told, that for very mean rewards, such as handfulls of barley and morsels of bread, they would bless or curse, save or destroy, and make the same word to be true or false, as it was most pleasing to their benefactors. Preaching was their delight, and in the name of the Lord, but he charges them with imposing and deceiving in his name; for they called evil good, and good evil; they justified the wicked, and condemned the righteous; they healed the hurt of the People slightly, meer quack-salvers, crying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. Whereas they should have gone to the bottom of the malady, and have laid open those Sins before the people, for which God had a controverſie with them, and for which he made their Heavens darkness, and their Earth a desert.

LET us resolve in the words of my Text (for we may use the words of *Balaam*, with a little change, and in a better sense) that a house full of silver and gold shall not prevail with us to transgress the word of the Lord: that we will not be drawn by any temptations of ambition, avarice, or of pleasing our selves or other men, to displease God: but order our lives honestly and uprightly, by the rule of his Commandments, acknowledging him to be our supreme Lord, whose voice we are bound to obey in the first place, and believing that he is able to protect us and provide for us, in the way of his service, however difficult or impolitick it may seem, and that he will give us all those blessings of this life and a better, which he has promised as the rewards of our obedience.

THUS

THUS if we contain our selves within the bounds of God's word, making it the law of our thoughts, words, and actions, we shall be the constant objects of his care, the children of his Family; we shall abide under the defence of the Most High, and rest under the shadow of the Almighty: his faithfulness and truth shall be our shield and buckler. He will lay his restraints upon all our enemies ghostly and bodily, as he did upon *Balaam*, that they shall not have the power to curse us; they shall not be able to smite us with the tongue nor with the sword; for God who hath the over-ruling of all mens faculties, will turn their curses into blessings. He will not suffer enchantments to prevail against *Jacob*, nor divinations against *Israel*. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, who is their strength in the time of trouble. He shall deliver them in six troubles, and in seven there shall no evil touch them. In famine he will redeem them from death, and in war from the power of the sword. He will rescue them from the hand of the wicked, and because their ways please him, he will make their enemies to be at peace with them. Finally, He will bless them in him, in whom men of all nations and languages shall be blessed, even Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, &c.



SERMON



SERMON XIX.

On the Second Sunday after EASTER.



NUMBERS XXV. 10, 11, 12, 13.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phineas the Son of Eleazar, the Son of Aaron the Priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel (while he was zealous for my sake among them) that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting Priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.

IN which words we have four things offered to our consideration. *First,* The person here spoken of. *Secondly,* His eminent zeal for the Lord. *Thirdly,* The speedy and good effect of his zeal. *Fourthly,* The ample reward of it.

I. THE

I. THE person here spoken of was *Phineas*, the grandson of *Aaron* by *Eleazar* his third Son. For *Aaron* had four Sons, *Nadab* and *Abihu*, *Eleazar* and *Itamar*. Of which, the two first were cut off by the hand of God, for an abuse which they committed in offering incense with unhal-
lowed fire, contrary to the divine Law. And leaving no Sons behind them, the priesthood came in order of succession to their younger Brothers, *Eleazar* and *Itamar*: of which, *Eleazar* being the elder, was chief, or High-priest. And this *Phineas* was his Son, and afterwards his successor: a wise, pious, and zealous man; imployed afterwards by the state of *Israel*, in the greatest Affairs both of War and Embassy. At this time it seems he was prince of the *Levites*, as *Eleazar* had been, while *Aaron* was living: 1 Chron. ix. 20. he is expressly styled Ruler of the *Korabites*, a considerable branch of his own Tribe, and consequently he was now a man of authority and a Magistrate in *Israel*.

II. His eminent zeal for God was shown upon the occasion mentioned in the beginning of this Chapter, where we read, that while the *Israelites* encamped in the plains of *Moab*, they fell in love with strange women, and were by them seduced to the worship of strange Gods. This provoked the Lord their God to visit them with the rod of correction; but because he had lately defeated the conspiracy of *Balak* and *Balaam* against them, he would not give them up for a prey to their Enemies, lest they should ascribe their victory to the power of their Idols, and the weakness of the God of *Israel*; but he took the matter into his own hands, and sent a pestilence among them, which quickly swept away twenty three thousand. And besides, he commanded *Moses* to take all the heads of the people, i. e. the Rulers

Rulers of thousands and hundreds, and other principal persons in their Tribes, who had been guilty of the lewdness and idolatry before mentioned, and to hang them up before the Sanctuary, both to make an atonement to the divine Justice, and to reclaim the people from the like provocations.

THESE unhappy circumstances were accompanied, as it was natural, with a general fasting and mourning, and supplications to God, to turn away from the fierceness of his anger. For which purpose *Moses* and all such as feared God, and laid their present condition to heart, were gathered together about the door of the Tabernacle. Where while they were humbling themselves with a suitable grief and sorrow, *Zimri*, one of the chief men of the tribe of *Simeon*, brought *Cozbi*, a daughter of one of the five Kings of *Midian*, of whom we read Chap. xxxi. 8. and led her into his Tent in the sight of *Moses* and of the whole congregation. Of this *Zimri*, *Josephus* writes, 'that when *Moses* had given out orders for the punishing of such *Israelites* as accompanied with strange women, he openly exclaimed at such proceedings as arbitrary and cruel, saying, there was no reason they should be thus debarred of a just liberty; and that *Moses*, under a pretence of governing them by the direction of God, oppressed them with worse than *Egyptian* slavery. That for himself, having taken a *Midianitish* woman to wife, he thought not fit to conceal it, as being no more than what was right and reasonable to be done.'

THIS was a bold insult upon all those who were concerned to maintain religion and piety in the Church of *Israel*: and it particularly stirred up the spirit of *Phineas* who sat among the mourners: who being the High-priest's Son, and in the prime of his years, was sooner filled with zeal and courage

238 SERMON XIX. On the

rage than older men. Accordingly he rose up out of the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand, and following *Zimri* into his Tent, struck him and *Cosbi* through their bodies at one stroke, so that they died immediately upon the spot.

Now this he might lawfully do, according to the course of justice then in practice amongst the *Israelites*. For they were under the direction of God by *Moses*, whose command to the subordinate magistrates and officers was, to put to death all the chiefs and ringleaders of the offenders. Such a magistrate or officer was *Phineas*, and therefore he might warrantably do this execution upon *Zimri*; and that with his own hands, as the custom was in such extraordinary cases, which differed nothing from military execution, where there is no room for such process as is used in civil Courts. The crime being plain, sudden, and of dangerous consequence, it was necessary that vengeance should speedily overtake it; otherwise the whole people might have been corrupted by bad examples.

NOR was this execution any breach of the Laws of that sacred order to which *Phineas* belonged, but rather a greater duty in him upon that account; it being meet and right, that where extraordinary zeal was necessary, it should begin at the house of God. Thus in the case of the golden Calf, *Exod. xxxii.* when *Moses* stood in the gate of the Camp, and cryed, *Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come to me:* all the *Levites* presently gathered about him. And he commanded them in the name of God, saying, *Gird on your swords, and go in and out from gate to gate through the Camp, and slay every man his brother, companion, and neighbour. And they did so: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.*

PHINEAS,

PHINEAS, thus qualified to do justice on *Zimri* and *Cosbi*, was animated with a holy indignation to execute it speedily, and with his own hand. He did not wait to see who of the congregation would rise before him, and take an invincible work out of his hands. He was not afraid lest his Seniors should condemn him for a rash young man, who had a zeal without knowledge. He did not defer the execution of judgment to a farther opportunity. Our old *English* version of *Psalms* cvi. 30. where this fact is mentioned, says, *Phineas stood up and prayed*; which is warranted by the *Chaldee* paraphrase. And no doubt he began with a prayer, but he did not end there. He did not say to himself, 'We are now engaged in a religious work, humbling our selves before God, and it is not seasonable to disturb the congregation; another time will be more proper to inflict deserved punishment on these offenders.' Neither was he afraid of the enmity he should incur, and the danger he ran by sacrificing two such illustrious and powerful malefactors, whose many relations and other friends would be apt to seek revenge. Had he been under the influence of such wary sentiments as these, he had never been rewarded, as he stands here in my Text, for a zealous man. For all these reasonings are too cool to consist with that quickness of resolution and fervour of Spirit, which deserves the name of Zeal in such exigencies.

On the contrary, this man was of a warmer constitution, or, to speak more properly, had an uncommon measure of the Spirit of God in him. Which made him challenge to himself the post of honour, as I may call it, in the cause of God, and strike the first stroke in the vindication of his worship against idolatry. He saw the divine wrath revealed from heaven against this Sin, which

to-day had consumed twenty three thousand of the people, and probably would have consumed as many more, had judgment been delayed till to-morrow. His eyes were so fixed on the glory of God, and the preservation of his people, that he had no care or concern for his own safety. His thoughts were so strongly impressed with zeal for the common good, that he was not at leisure to think of his own private danger. Zeal being compounded of love and anger, two of the strongest passions of the mind, flies forward impetuously, without hearkning to the suggestions of fear and cautious deliberation. These passions were the wings of our religious champion's Soul, an ardent love of the God of *Israel*, and an indignation at those who were violating his honour. And thus we have seen *Phineas* his zeal for the cause of God. Let us now observe in the

III^d place, THE speedy and good effect of it. *Phineas*, says God, *hath turned away my wrath from the children of Israel, that I consumed them not in my jealousy*. It is noted of the sin of Idolatry, that it provokes God to jealousy above all other sins whatever: in that Law which he enacted against this sin, he styles himself a jealous God, and threatens to remember it and punish it in the late posterity of the offenders. The reason is, because the Covenant between God and his people has the resemblance of a marriage-contract, to which it is often compared in Holy Writ; and consequently apostasie from God to Idolatry is spiritual whoredom.

NOW the *Israelites* in the history before us, being doubly guilty of this sin, both with strange women and with their idols, this caused the divine jealousy to burn like fire against them, and it broke out upon them in a consuming pestilence, which destroyed in one day twenty three thousand, as

St. Paul

Second Sunday after EASTER. 241

St. Paul writes, 1 Cor. x. For whereas it is said just before my Text, that there died in the plague twenty four thousand, it is supposed that a thousand of them fell by the hands of those officers whom Moses commanded to arise and slay such of their men as had joined themselves to Baalpeor. This order was begun to be executed by Phineas, whose example encouraged the rest of the officers to proceed in the execution, as Josephus affirms. And so, by a speedy and undaunted slaughter of the apostates, they put an end to the apostasie of Israel, and by consequence to the plague which was sent to correct it. For God applies not supernatural remedies, where natural and ordinary means will do. But one or other of these courses must be taken, in publick and flagrant enormities. God or man must strike the offenders, and make them a terrible example to evil-doers; or else they will infect the whole people, and make them so wicked, that they will be fit for nothing but to be rooted out from the face of the Earth. What our blessed Lord says of the members of the natural body, he would have practised in political and spiritual cases. If any one member become so corrupt, as that it threatens to infect all the rest, cut it off, and cast it away: for it is much better to part with it in time, than to be utterly destroyed by it. And so it is in the body of the common-wealth; that the whole may be preserved, let that which is infectious be lopp off.

To do this, is not cruelty but mercy. None will blame God or man for doing it, but such as either do not understand it, or else are advocates and patrons of iniquity. God affirms of himself, that he is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great pity: that he spares us often when we deserve punishment, and is very unwilling to afflict us. And yet he sent grievous plagues at

several times upon his own people; but it was for the reason before mentioned, viz. to recover them from such sinful courses as would have proved far more destructive to them than any of his visitations; it was sending upon them a less evil, in order to remove a much greater; and it was generally in cases where the hand of man either would not or could not vindicate the honour of God. His judgments are intended to awaken men, and stir them up to plead for him and his righteousness. When this is effected, he commands the destroying Angel to sheath the avenging sword, as in the present case. *Phineas*, says he, *hath appeased my wrath, by zealously executing judgment.* And so *Phineas*, by this execution, was the instrument of a two-fold blessing to the people. He put an end to their sin and to their punishment. He deterred them from their whoredoms and idolatries, and he caused the devouring pestilence to cease and be withdrawn from them. So speedy was the effect, so happy the issue of his zeal for God.

I come now in the *Fourth* place to consider God's gracious acceptance and reward of this service, which he expresses in these words of my Text, *Behold, I give him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood.*

IN which words the first thing to be considered is, *the Covenant of peace*, which comprehends all manner of blessings, and is a solemn engagement to make him and his posterity prosperous. As to his own personal felicity, he certainly enjoyed the blessing of a very long life: for he outlived *Joshua*, to the time of the Judges; as it is noted near the end of their history: for we read, *Judg. xx. 28.* that *Phineas the Son of Eleazar the Son of Aaron then stood before the Lord.* And the promise of peace may farther import, that he and his

his children should continue in the priest's office; to make an atonement and reconciliation between God and his people. This is confirmed by the next words: *he shall have, says God, the Covenant of an everlasting priesthood, to him and his seed after him, i. e. as long as the Jews continued to be a church and people.* Yet this succession of the family of *Phineas* in the high-priesthood, was not without some interruption by *Eli* and his children, who were descended from *Ithamar* the youngest Son of *Aaron*, and presided till the days of *Solomon*, when the line of *Phineas* was restored. From him *Azariah* was the twelfth; who executed the Priest's office in *Solomon's* Temple. From *Azariah* there were nine more to the captivity of *Babylon*; as we read, *1 Chron. vi.* And from the end of that captivity to the time of *Antiochus Eupator*, the Jews reckon fifteen more, the last of which, *Onias*, was slain by *Lysias*. After him there were eight of the family of the *Asmonaei*; *Ariseobulus* the eighth was killed by *Herod*; who, after that, made whom he pleased high-priest.

How *Eli* the younger family came to break in upon the line of *Phineas*, is uncertain. Some think that after these had held the office for four Generations successively; their children were too young; or otherwise incapable; and *Eli* the fittest of the priests to administer the affairs of the Jewish nation; to which he was appointed by God, *1 Sam. ii. 30.* Others well observe, that it being the constant course of God's proceedings, to continue his mercies to the *Israelites* upon the condition of their obedience; but to take them away when they became disobedient; it is highly reasonable to conclude, that there was some great offence given to God by some of the race of *Phineas*; which caused the interruption of the high-priesthood in his family.

AND whereas it may be objected, that there was no special grace and favour in God's granting the high-priesthood to *Phineas* and his posterity, as the reward of his zeal, since he was intitled to it already by right of Inheritance: It is answered, that there was; inasmuch as he might have died before his Father *Eleazar*, and so never have come to the enjoyment of it; or he might have had no Sons, and so not have enjoyed it in his children: which advantages are now by the divine promise secured to him.

AND to be invested with the priesthood as the special gift of God, was more honourable than to succeed to it by course of Inheritance; since there are many unworthy heirs of high offices and estates: but those who are immediately advanced to them by God and their Prince, are justly presumed to be most worthy of them. And even where there is an antecedent promise of a blessing, yet to have it so graciously repeated and confirmed, makes a great addition to the value of it. Thus *Abraham* had been promised that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, long before God commanded him to sacrifice his Son: but this promise was renewed to him upon that occasion, as the reward of his ready obedience.

AND thus much of God's approbation and reward of *Phineas*, and his zeal in slaying *Zimri* and *Cosbi*.

FROM what has been said, several conclusions may be drawn with respect to publick happiness or misery.

As 1st, WE learn from hence; That no evil can befall a people comparable to the overflowings of Impiety and Debauchery. No enchantment is so dangerous as that of sensual lust; no forcerer so pernicious as he who perswades men to neglect the worship of God, to cast off his fear, to walk
in

Second Sunday after EASTER. 243

in the ways of their own hearts, and sacrifice to the idols of their own corrupt affections. For by such apostasie from God, we not only lose in him a most gracious Father, an omnipotent Protector, an inexhaustible fountain of life and health, and all necessities and comforts; but we make him our enemy; we incense his wrath, and arm his vengeance against our selves, we draw down his judgments upon our heads. These were the enchantments; contempt of God, and sensual lusts, were the infernal charms which prevailed against *Jacob*, and brought a curse upon *Israel*. Before they were overcome with these, no powers of earth or hell could hurt them. But no sooner do we hear of their fornication and idolatry, but we find them falling by the sword of the destroying Angel, and of their own magistrates and officers. Their sins broke through their security, and opened a door to their miseries.

So that whatever it is which makes us sinners, makes us miserable. And this may help us to correct some mistakes which we are apt to entertain about our greatest calamities and worst enemies. We commonly think that war and famine, bad seasons and losses, sickness, pain and poverty, are the greatest evils of mortal life. Whereas rebellion against God is worse than all these, because it is the loathsome parent of these furies, which could never appear in the World, did not Sin produce them, nor be able to hurt us, did not our sins give them their sting and their venom.

So likewise we esteem those as our worst Enemies who take arms against us and spoil us; while we overlook those amongst us who blaspheme God, and are hinderers and slanderers of his word; we are in friendship and confederacy with Atheists, Libertines, unclean, dissolute, riotous Livers,

246 SERMON XIX. *On the*

who are continually infecting us with their sins, and involving us in their punishments. For,

2^{dly}, *SUCH* sinners always bring down judgments upon the places where they live, as being enemies to all goodness. And as by their execrations and blasphemies they turn their habitations into a resemblance of hell; so God withdraws the light of his presence and favour from them, and gives them up by degrees to darkness and horror. He recalls that Angel of his host, who encamps round about those that fear him, and delivers them; he recalls him from the Tents of these ungodly men, and suffers the reprobate spirits, whose works they imitate, to enter with all their train of mischiefs, and reign among them.

AND can we wonder at this? can it be at all strange to us, that people who are always wishing for mischief, and invoking the author of it, and giving up themselves and their best friends to perdition, should have any thing but evil for their portion? As Christ said of the Pharisees, that all they aim'd at in their religion was the praise of men, and they had their reward; so when we see mischief befall a prophane, cursing Generation, we may say, they have the proper answer of their prayers. For the *Psalmist's* observation will always be true: He that delighteth in cursing, it shall come upon him: He that loveth not blessing, it shall be far from him.

But 3^{dly}, To what purpose do I mention these sins, and of what use can they be to any pious man? Why my Text points out the use we should make of them; not only to abstain from them, not only to mourn for them, but to express a hearty zeal and indignation against them: to declare to the patrons and actors of them, that we account them to be enemies of God and man; to separate as much as we can from their company,

Second Sunday after EASTER. 247

ny, and to endeavour to bring them to condign punishment. This zeal should begin at the chief Magistrate, who should not bear the sword in vain, but make himself a terror to evil-doers. And from him it should be propagated to all subordinate officers, who should be quick and courageous in vindicating the cause of religion and virtue. And after them, men of all ranks and conditions, who invoke God by the name of Father in their prayers, should approve themselves his dutiful and affectionate children, by boldly rebuking the outrages and vices of impious men, whom if they find incorrigible, they should plainly detest, and renounce any farther communion with them.

THIS is no more than what is requisite to maintain that relation which we bear to God, either as his servants or his children. We cannot make good any one article of that love, fear, reverence, and gratitude which we owe him for his daily benefits, if we can hear him blasphemed and dishonoured without shewing any resentment of such offences. If we are easie under such affronts of the divine Majesty, we joyn in rebellion against him, and make our selves partners in other mens sins. We add to the weight of those judgments which God will certainly pour down upon a faithless and provoking people, and for our luke-warmness and unworthiness, we shall justly bear a share of such judgments.

BUT if we vindicate the honour of our Lord and heavenly Father with that becoming zeal which is here recommended in my Text, and in many other places of the divine Word; in so doing we shall testifie our belief of his power and providence over us, and a thankful acknowledgment of the benefits we receive from him;

148 SERMON XIX.

and we may avert his judgments from falling on our own and others heads in this World; at least we shall secure our everlasting peace with God, and attain to the Inheritance of his adopted children, through him who was the greatest example of zeal for the divine honour and glory, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, &c.



and we may avert his judgments from falling on our own and others heads in this World; at least we shall secure our everlasting peace with God, and attain to the Inheritance of his adopted children, through him who was the greatest example of zeal for the divine honour and glory, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, &c.

SERMON



SERMON XX.

On the Third Sunday after EASTER.



DEUTERONOMY V. 2.

The Lord our God made a Covenant with us in Horeb.

I Have formerly observed, that this book of *Deuteronomy* is so named, because it contains a repetition of those things, which had been told and related in the foregoing books. And this chapter is a plain proof of the truth of this assertion. For here we have those ten Commandments rehearsed; which were written before, *Exod. xx.* To this Rehearsal the words of my Text are a proper introduction; and they offer three things to our consideration. I. The place where this Law was delivered. II. Why it is called a Covenant: III. The parties between whom it was made.

And 1st, THE place where the Law was delivered, is here called *Horeb*; tho' in *Exod. xix.* it is called *Sinai*: and these two names are used promiscuously in several places of holy Scripture, for one and the same mountain. Our *European Travellers*

250 SERMON XX. On the

vellers who have seen them, say, they are two Eminences arising from one and the same ridge: That they are at this day inhabited by Christians, with some mixture of *Jews* and *Turks*. That at the foot of *Sinai*, there is a christian Monastery dedicated to St. *Katharine*, which has caused the hill to be called St. *Katharine's* mount. This *Bellonius*, one of the Travellers, calls a high and inaccessible hill. That there was no natural way to ascend it, but only by steps cut out by the hands of men. That tho' they began to ascend at break of day, yet it was afternoon before they came up to the top. This agrees with what *Josephus* writes of this mountain, that it is by far the highest of any in that Country; and by reason of its steep and ragged rocks, is not only unfrequented of men, but cannot be beheld without some horror. However our Travellers found some habitations about it. For they tell us the Monks of St. *Katharines* shewed them two chappels at the top, and several on the sides of the mount, one of which is dedicated to *Elias*, being built in the place where he is supposed to have lain hid, when he fled from *Jezabel*. They likewise shewed the place, where *Moses* received from God the two Tables of the Law. It is a little fair chappel, shut up with an iron door. But these works are owing to the devotions of later times; in the days of *Moses* it is certain that these mountains were uninhabited.

FROM the side of *Horeb* (says *Bellonius*) there falls a very fair spring of water into the valley adjoining. And very probable it is, that there was such a water in *Moses's* time. First, Because he incamped thereabout almost a year, and drew no water, as in other places, by miracle. Secondly, Because it is written, *Exod. xxxii.* that when *Moses* had ground the Golden-calf to powder, he cast it into the water, and made the children of *Israel* to drink of it.

Third Sunday after EASTER. 231

ON this mountain (for we shall speak of *Sinai* and *Horeb* agreeably to the scripture style, as of one and the same place) the divine Law was given to *Moses* for the government of God's Church and People. It stands in the desert of *Arabia*, about the distance of sixty miles from the Red-sea.

HEN they arrived in forty five days from their departure out of *Egypt*, and encamped before this mount for two reasons: one was, a former instruction which God had given to *Moses*, when he first employed him in the deliverance of his People, *Exod. iii. 12.* that when they were delivered, they should worship him in this place. The other was, that the *Shechinah*, or glorious cloud, which led them in their travels, and by resting determined their stations, now rested upon this mountain.

OUT of this Glory God called unto *Moses*, on the first day of their arrival here, commanding him to prepare the People for the hearing of his Law, by putting them in mind how he had fought for them against the *Egyptians*, and carried them in the Wilderness as an Eagle carries her young ones, and chosen them above all nations of the World, to be a peculiar People to himself. Then he directs them how to purifie themselves against the approaching solemnity, to wash their cloaths, and abstain from all sensual enjoyments for three days together. And he charges them, upon peril of their lives, to keep at a due distance from the mount, during the promulgation of the Law, and not to lay a hand upon it, or offer to climb up, out of curiosity to see more of the divine Appearance at the top of it.

WHEN the People were thus prepared and instructed how to behave themselves, the Lord descended upon the Mount, with myriads of his holy Angels, in a thick cloud, out of which came
thunders

thunders and lightnings, and the sound of a trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the People in the Camp trembled. And *Moses* brought them forth out of their Camp, and placed them at the foot of the mountain, to attend upon God. And mount *Sinai* burnt to the midst of Heaven; because the Lord came down upon it in fire, and the smoke ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked exceedingly. And when the sound of the trumpet had lasted long, and still increased as it went on, *Moses* spake unto God to excuse his nearer approach, saying, *I exceedingly fear and tremble.* But God encouraged him not to fear, bidding him come up to the top of the mount. So *Moses* went up, and entered into the midst of that fire and cloud, wherewith the mountain was enveloped.

THIS was only to confirm his faith, and give him an assurance of safety. For he did not now stay to receive the Law, but was presently sent down again, to repeat the charge which had been given before to the People, that they should not break thro' their bounds to gaze upon the divine Appearance. *And let the priests, says he, which come near to the Lord to perform sacred offices, purifie themselves from all uncleanness, but let them not come up with thee: Only Aaron was admitted to come up higher, because he was shortly to be consecrated High-Priest, and he would be the more revered by the People, when they saw him admitted far nearer to God than they were.*

AFTER the trumpet had summoned the People to attend, there came a voice from the *Schechinah* or divine Majesty, out of the midst of the fire, i. e. of the Angelick Host, which appeared like flames of fire. Which made *St. Paul* say, *Gal. iii. 19. That the law was ordained by Angels, who were then in attendance on the divine Majesty, as his*
retinue,

Third Sunday after EASTER. 211

retinue, when he proclaimed these ten Commandments. And he proclaimed them with so strong a voice, that all the People, who were very numerous, plainly heard them.

AND thus much of the Place where, and the Manner how the Law was delivered.

II. THE next thing to be enquired into is, why this Law is called a Covenant.

I answer: A Covenant is a compact or mutual agreement between parties, to be serviceable to one another upon certain conditions. And so it is here: The short account of God's Covenant with Israel, is this: *I will be their God, to protect them: and they shall be my people, in obeying my laws.* Now tho' God is the supreme Governor of all the World; yet the reason upon which he founds his right to be the Lord and Lawgiver of Israel is, because he had with many miracles redeemed them, and taken them into his protection. *I, says he, have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, therefore thou shalt worship me only, and keep my commandments.*

HAVING purchased them with many Judgments wrought for their deliverance, and separated them from other nations to be a peculiar People to himself, it was proper that he should give them a body of laws, as all Kings and Founders of Common-wealths usually do in the infancy of their government. And like them, God condescends to stipulate and contract with his People, shewing them the reasons and advantages of his Laws, and proposing it to their own choice, whether they will accept of them or not. *If, says he, ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people. Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. i. e. Ye shall be most free and happy, like Kings ye shall have no superior on earth,*

214 SERMON XX. On the

earth, being safe under my protection, supported by your piety, not by your arms: like Priests, you shall spend your time in sacrificing, and feasting upon your sacrifices; not being driven, like the heathen, to consult lying oracles, and to help your selves, in difficult cases, by the wretched arts of divination; for I, the God of truth and wisdom, will be your counsellor and director in all your affairs.

THESE proposals on God's part, Moses, as he was commanded, laid before the elders of Israel, and they communicated them to the People, who answered with one consent, *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do: we take him for our king, and will obey his laws.* Which answer Moses, as a mediator between God and the People, returned to the Lord. The like answer they gave after the promulgation of the Law, *Exod. xxiv.* when Moses having wrote it in a book, built an Altar, offered sacrifices, and sprinkled half the blood on the Altar. Then he took the book of the Covenant, and read it in the audience of the People: and they said, *All that the Lord hath said, we will do, and be obedient.* After which, he took the other half of the blood, and sprinkled it on the People, and said, *Behold the blood of the Covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.* Thus the divine Law passed into a Covenant between God and his People. It was plainly proposed and declared on God's part; it was voluntarily accepted and agreed to by the People; it was committed to writing, and solemnly ratified and confirmed by sacrifice.

BUT here some man may ask, Why did God transact with his People by way of Covenant, and propose the terms of his government to their consideration, and wait for their consent? Why did he not rather chuse to notify his will and pleasure

to them, and demand their obedience by vertue of that right which he has over all his creatures?

I answer: God submitted his Laws to the approbation of his People, that he might justify the reasonableness of them. For who among them could think it unreasonable to put himself under the protection of that God alone, who had triumphed so gloriously over all the gods of *Egypt*, and wrought the greatest Miracles in Heaven, Earth, and Sea, for the deliverance of his People? Who would grudge to sanctifie their first-born, keep the passover, and observe other proper commemorations of this deliverance? Who would not esteem it a great favour and goodness of their God, to excuse them from making such costly images of him, as the nations of the World commonly made of their deities? What grateful mind would not be willing to consecrate one day in seven to his service, and honour him with the first fruits of the earth, and the sacrifices of their flocks and herds, who fed them with Manna in the Wilderness, and led them to a land flowing with milk and honey? Finally, What lover of the virtues of private or publick life, would not be glad to live under such laws as restrained injuries and debaucheries, and were a terror to evil-doers, but a protection and encouragement to men of a sober, pious, and beneficent conversation? Such were the Laws which God enacted for the government of his People, so plain and full of good sense, so well suited to the benefit of society, and of every individual person in it, that they might safely be referred to the judgment of the Elders, as worthy to be the laws of that *Theocracy*, that Government which God would exercise in *Israel*.

2dly, God treated with his People in a way that might gain their consent to his Laws, because he would reign over them as a free People. He

He had lately delivered them from tyrannical masters, who loaded them with burdens which they were not able to bear: and therefore he resolved that they should now taste the sweets of liberty. In order to which, he will injoin them no service but what their own judgment shall approve, and their own tongues pronounce to be fair, equitable, and conducive to their own happiness.

I desire to be understood of the moral Law, which is here recited presently after the words of my Text. I confess the ritual Law is sometimes called a yoke and a servitude. But it is so called by the Apostles, not absolutely, but in comparison of the Gospel, which was the end and substance of it. Before this end was accomplished, and this substance exhibited, the ritual Law was as necessary to lead men to it, as a School-master, to use *St. Paul's* similitude, is, to teach any science or part of learning; and could only then become useless when the end was attained; and so, and no otherwise, is it represented as a yoke.

INDEED the nature of God is so thoroughly good, that he cannot exact any thing of his People as a duty, which is not conducive to their spiritual or temporal welfare. And nothing can render the service of his People acceptable to him, but the performing of it with a free heart and willing mind. This is the reason why the duties of the first Table are all summed up in the love of God. He that loveth not God, is not qualified to keep his Commandments: nor can he love God, without being sensible of the excellency of his Laws; which when he is convinced of, he will freely and readily obey them.

AND thus much of the reasonableness of the divine Oeconomy: it is founded in a Covenant or mutual agreement between God and his People; whereby

Third Sunday after EASTER. 257

whereby God engages to bless them, and they promise to obey him, not grudgingly, and as it were by compulsion; but with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind.

THIS seems to make it needless to observe, what I proposed in the

III^d place, WHO were the parties to this Covenant. Yet *Moses* has observed it in the next words after my Text. *The Lord, says he, made not this covenant with our fathers; but with us; even us who are all of us here alive this day.*

THIS is not so to be understood, as if God had made no Covenant with *Abraham* and the Patriarchs: for he stipulated very expressly with them, to be their God, to give them the land of *Canaan*, to multiply them exceedingly, and to bless all nations in their seed. And he instituted Circumcision for a sign and token of this Covenant. But he did not so appropriate them to himself, and form them into a peculiar People, by giving them a body of Laws for that purpose, as he now gave them at *Horeb*. For *Ismael* the son of *Abraham*, and *Esau* the son of *Isaac*, went out from their fathers houses, and founded Kingdoms and People very different from *Israel* in their religion, laws, and customs. But now the twelve Tribes are separated from all the World, to become the Kingdom or People of God, and to be governed by these Laws which were here given them at *Horeb*; and which were intended to bind not only the present Generation, but their Posterity after them. For this Command was often inculcated upon them, that they should educate their children in the knowledge and observance of these laws, and charge them to transmit the same to their children.

THIS Covenant therefore, or form of Government, comprehended all *Israel*, and them only as a
VOL. III. S nation,

258 SERMON XX. On the

nation, but it did not exclude people of other nations and families, who thought fit to enter into it. Accordingly we read of many who became Profelytes to the *Jews* religion, who if they dwelt in distant countries, as it often happened, they went to *Jerusalem* at certain seasons, to offer sacrifice, because there only sacrifice might be offered. But we do not read that any entire Nation ever embraced the same form of Government; nor can we well conceive to what purpose it would have been, except God had revealed himself to them, and covenanted with them as expressly as he did with the People of *Israel*; which we may justly conclude he never intended, both from the apparent order of his decrees, and from those prerogatives, which he granted to this People above all nations of the earth.

UPON this occasion we cannot but take notice how God prefers some people above others, by revealing his Will and dispensing his Grace and Favour to one Nation, while many others lay neglected, sunk in ignorance, corrupted with idolatries, and destitute of such light as might direct them to any kind of happiness either in this or a future state. If we would know the reason of these different dispensations, and ask why God is more gracious to one than to another, we must consider what sort of obligations God has entred into, to be the Lord and Saviour of men. The obligations are called, as here, by the name of Covenants, which, as I noted before, import mutual, free, and voluntary agreements between parties, of something to be done upon certain conditions; which when they are broken by one side, the other party is released from his share of the bond or obligation.

Now three such Covenants, we read in Scripture, have been transacted between God and men.

The

Third Sunday after EASTER. 239

The first was that in Paradise, between God and all mankind in the person of our first Parents: which when they had broken, all their race fell under the sentence of death, the penalty annexed to the transgression. The second Covenant was God's merciful grant to *Abraham* and his Posterity, whom he chose out of the bulk of fallen men, engaging to be their God, and to own them for his People, upon the condition of their obedience to his Laws. This was often violated on the part of the faithless *Jews*, and finally cancelled and abrogated, upon their crucifying the Messiah, and consequently denying the Father who sent him. The third Covenant was established in the Faith of the said Messiah, and in pursuance of the divine Promise, that in him all nations and families should be blessed, and it was granted upon this condition, *that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* This excludes from the Salvation of God, all those who are aliens or enemies to Jesus Christ, which renders the acceptance of it so much the more dear and valuable. And tho' it has been horribly abused in the World, so that whole nations have been justly deprived of the benefit of it, and abandoned to a reigning and destructive Infidelity; yet in some other places it still subsists, and so it shall, some where or other, to the end of the World.

Of these three Covenants, the first and last were universal, extending to all mankind; the second particular, to *Israel* only. And according to the intent and meaning of a Covenant, no man could ever reap any benefit by them, but he that performed the conditions which belonged to his part to perform. And of the many people and nations of the World, God hath taken some into covenant with himself, and others he hath left out. For what reason he has made this difference,

whether out of his own meer Grace and Goodness, or through foresight that some would prove more deserving of the privileges of his Covenant than others, is a point attended with difficulties which I have not leisure at present to discuss; only this is certain, that those who are taken into covenant with God, are called to a condition and state of Salvation, to which others who are not called, have no manner of right or title. For tho' of the many who are called and entred into covenant with God, but few prove sincere and worthy members, so as faithfully to perform the conditions of it, yet all are called out of their natural darkness into the light of God's Truth, and the way of Salvation; which if they do not attain, it is because they will not walk in the way to it: the means are put into their hands to become partakers of it; if they miscarry, it is because they have no heart nor good-will to the work which must entitle them to the reward.

BUT now, those who were never taken into the new Covenant of God's Mercy and Reconciliation with mankind, are in no capacity to receive the benefits of it: they are still under that curse and sentence of damnation which past upon all our race in the persons of our first Parents. They are every where in Scripture represented as children of wrath, sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, alienated and cut off from the family of God's children, and shut out from that Kingdom, which he hath opened to none but those who keep his Covenant.

AND indeed it would be very unaccountable that God should take such pains, if I may so speak, and work so many miracles for the redemption of his People out of *Egypt*, and for their Salvation by Jesus Christ, and that he should so solemnly enter into covenant with them, to serve him

him by a new Law of his own dictating and revealing, if men were in a capacity to be saved out of this Covenant, and there were in nature an obligation upon God to be their Saviour, and to remit the penalty which they had incurred by their first transgression.

THIS is such a just and fair way of arguing, that the Deist who builds his salvation upon the practice of what he calls natural religion, is forced to deny our first principles, I mean, the authority and truth of holy Scripture; which is indeed the only way that he has to maintain his cause. For if the Bible be true, then it is certain that God has made a new Covenant with mankind, and that Salvation can be obtained no otherwise but upon the terms of that Covenant.

As to the Deists natural religion, I believe they do not know what they mean by it. If they mean, the belief and worship of the true God, it is plain, from the great variety of false religions in the World, that the light of nature is not a sufficient guide to lead men into this truth. But if by natural religion they mean the practice of moral virtue, they speak very improperly, and even so lay a wrong foundation; for meer natural reason is not sufficient to find out and prescribe all the needful rules of strict moral virtue. If I should say, that the laws of justice, temperance, and all moral virtues, which have been written by the wisest Legislators and Philosophers of the *Gentiles*, were but traditions of such Doctrines as at first were revealed by God, I should say no more than what learned men have advanced before me, and supported their opinion by probable arguments. And it is an unanswerable objection against the sufficiency of meer human reason for all moral actions, that the wisest and politest Nations have differed from one another as much in their noti-

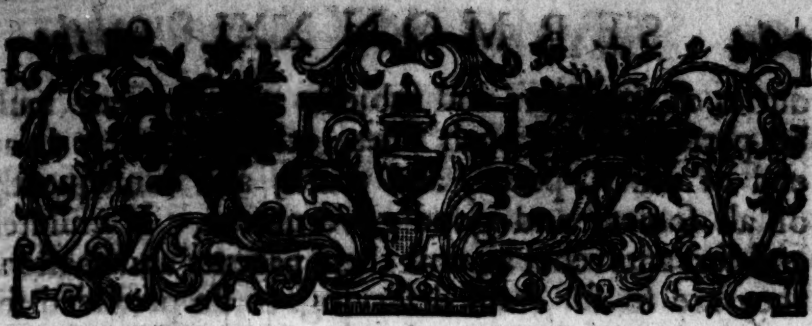
462 SERMON XX. On the

ons and practice of Morality, as in matters of Religion.

BUT supposing we had naturally the knowledge of the whole moral Law, yet is the Word of God an inestimable blessing to the World, because it effectually prescribes it, adding to it the sanction of proper rewards and punishments, and bringing it home to be a rule to the very thoughts and intentions of our hearts. I am apt to think, that the *Israelites* knew the substance of the moral Law, before they came to mount *Horeb*. But their hearing it proclaimed from thence with such awful solemnity, by the voice of God, and receiving it in Tables written with his own hand, as part of his Covenant with them, rendered it for ever sacred and of divine Authority to them. And when, towards the end of their Church and State, their Rabbies had made this Law of small effect by their opposite traditions, how well did our Lord restore it, and how strongly did he inforce it upon our consciences, by assuring us, that not only our words and works, but even the secrets of our hearts shall be judged by this Law at the last day.

To conclude then: Let us always be mindful of the new Covenant which God hath made with us; let us labour to understand it, and esteem it, and praise him for it: and let no suggestions of wicked men or devils hinder us from performing our part of this Covenant, that so we may be entitled to the privileges of it, even an Inheritance with those who are adopted into the Family of God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father,
Gl.

SERMON



SERMON XXI.

On the Fourth Sunday after EASTER.



DEUTERONOMY vii. 12.

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments and keep and do them; that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the Covenant and the Mercy which he swore unto thy fathers.



VERY frequent are God's admonitions to his People, to excite them to a diligent observance of his Laws; and very needful they are, for two reasons. I. Because of the exorbitant affections of our minds, which are apt to run astray, and break thro' the bounds of all good laws, especially the laws of Holiness and Virtue, which tho' agreeable to our judgment, are contrary to our natural inclinations. II. Because upon our obedience to God's Laws depends all our claim to his fatherly love and blessing. As he has made us rational creatures, so he treats us in the same reasonable way as we deal with one another. The relative

duties of superiors and subjects among men, must be performed on both sides, otherwise there is an end of unity, peace, and truth, and consequently of all society and good government. If children and servants rebel against their parents and masters, they are so far from deserving to be provided for and maintained upon the score of such relation, that they should be punished more severely and turned out of the family, as acting an unnatural part. No more reason have we to hope for any blessing of God, on the account of our being his creatures and children, if we refuse him our obedience; this is what he has insisted on from the first production of our race upon earth. From *Adam* to the present generation he has always said the same thing to men, as he says in my Text, *If ye will honour and obey me as your God, then, and no otherwise, will I own and bless you as my children and people.*

FROM hence, and from the whole body of sacred writ, it is undoubtedly plain, that God deals with us upon the foot, not of natural but positive relation; a relation contracted by a Covenant and agreement which has passed between us, that he will be our God and Saviour, provided we hearken to his voice and do his will.

AND indeed, if the Scripture were silent, even common sense would shew us the necessity of knowing God and doing his Will, before we could rightly invoke him as our God. This may be illustrated by the following case. Suppose our first Parent were still alive upon earth, and by his innocence had preserved his happy estate in Paradise; and that many of his posterity, by following his steps, were in the same condition. If others had sinned, and lost their happiness, as no doubt in all this time they might have done, they would have been separated and banished at a great distance

distance from the righteous. Their natural relation to them would have availed them nothing. And the case is much the same in the present state of things; unworthy children and servants do but abuse their Correlatives, without any benefit to themselves, when they call them parents and masters. And tho' the weakness of man may condescend to own such relations, yet the honour and justice of God will not permit him to do it. *If I am your father*, says he to his disobedient people, *where is mine honour?* *if I am your master, where is the fear and reverence you owe me?* This is fair reasoning, and the new Testament abounds with it. 'Think not,' says *John the Baptist* to the *Jews*, 'to flatter yourselves that you are descended from *Abraham*, as if that would recommend you to God, without bringing forth the fruits of Repentance. If ye were the children of *Abraham*,' says *Christ*, *ye would do his works.*' This is exactly consonant to the meaning of my Text. God promises to confer upon the *Israelites* the Mercies which he had sworn to their fore-fathers, but it was upon this condition, that they kept his Covenant and the Laws which he gave them. However, some of their later generations would needs claim his Promise to belong to them absolutely, as they were of the lineage of *Abraham*: Than which nothing could be more contrary to the meaning of the divine Covenant, which was plainly granted upon the condition of faithful obedience. Where that was horribly violated, God withdrew his mercies, and gave up his People to deserved punishment. And so he declares to *Eli*, that tho' he had promised to continue his family in the Priests office for ever, yet now for the villainess of his sons, he revokes that Promise. *For*, says he, *those that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.*

BUT

BUT why do I go beyond this Book of Deuteronomy, which is almost as full of curses denounced against disobedience, as of mercies promised to the obedient Israelites? Take an abridgement of them at the end of the ninth chapter, *Thou shalt remember, says Moses, the Lord thy God, that he may establish his Covenant which he swore to thy fathers. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget him, and serve other Gods, I will reprove against you this day, that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroys before your face, so shall ye perish: because ye would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God.* What could be a plainer warning to the Israelites not to depend upon the Almighty for their God, if they did not take care to approve themselves his People? The Oath, or the Covenant which he confirmed by an oath to their fathers, was not to be made good to them in case they forgot their God, and corrupted and changed their Religion. In so doing, they were to expect nothing but destruction, as much as the *Canaanites*, who for their impieties were rooted out before them.

I know it is the caution of *Moses* to this People, ch. ix. not to flatter themselves that *Canaan* was given them as the reward of their singular Piety and Virtue. No, says he, *but for the wickedness of these nations God drives them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which he swore to thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.* This is no ways inconsistent with what I have been pleading for, that God loves and favours none but the obedient. These *Israelites* had often rebelled against God, and they had suffered as often, by pestilence, or some other judgment. From whence they might learn the two things here inculcated upon them; 1st, That they had no cause to value themselves upon their allegiance to their God and King,

King, which they had so often broken. *silly*, That they had no encouragement to indulge themselves upon the score of their relation to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*. *God*, says he, will give you the possession of *Canaan*, in pursuance of his Covenant with your pious fathers: but he will blast you in it, and dispossess you of it, if you degenerate from their piety and virtue.

METHINKS I hear the Almighty declaring, that he is no respecter of persons or families any farther than he finds true piety in them, nor will be a God to any man, who does not approve himself his servant by an active obedience. I am sure our blessed Lord tells the *Jews*, that they were not the children of *Abraham*, i. e. not so accounted of God; not being faithful to his Covenant, they had no title to his promises and blessings; but that their works proclaimed they were from beneath, and that their father was the prince of darkness. Throughout his Gospel the children of God are characterized as doers of his Will, and others are represented as vain pretenders to the blessings of his Religion. Particularly he reproves the formal hearers of his word, saying, *Why call ye me Lord and Master, and never mind to practise the duties which I teach you?* He foretells us, that in the day of judgment they will plead for themselves, how they have heard his Word, and received his Sacraments; but that if they be found workers of iniquity, that plea shall avail them nothing. He teaches us that our filial obedience and imitation of God, is the best ground we can have to invoke him as our Father. For when one of the assembly where he was preaching, told him, that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him, he stretched forth his hand to his Disciples and said, *Behold my mother and my brethren. For whatsoever doth the will of my father*

father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.

THESE things being so, it concerns us to take heed that we be not mis-led by two sorts of men, whose principles and practices are very repugnant to these Scriptures.

The first sort are those who imagine God to be equally pleased with all mankind, who live according to the law of nature, and best light which they can attain to: and that he is bound by the laws of creation, and by all his attributes of justice, mercy, and goodness, to be a Saviour to these, as much as to those who are in covenant with him, and live in the knowledge and practice of his revealed Will. And for this they think they have good proof and warrant from some passages even of Scripture it self. But whatever the meaning of such passages may be, which I have not now time to examine, it is plain that the general voice of Scripture is directly contrary to this assertion. When *St. Peter* affirms, 'That in every nation the man that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him;' and when *St. Paul* teaches, 'That the *Gentiles* which have no revelation, have the Law written in their hearts;' If their meaning were as these men interpret them, they would flatly contradict their own writings. For they assure us, that no man can have a sufficient and saving knowledge of the true God, but by the revelation which he has made of himself, not barely by the works of nature, but in the writings of the old and new Testament. And lest we should think that, God having redeemed mankind by Jesus Christ, the benefit of this Redemption may be extended to those who never heard of him, nor put up a prayer in his name; they assert, with the best reason, and from the mouth of their great Master, that with-

out

Fourth Sunday after EASTER. 269

out faith it is impossible to please God; and that this Faith must be formed by the reading and hearing of his holy Word; that if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. That if we will become the adopted children of his Father, and members of his celestial Family, we must actually be engrafted into his mystical body the Church, and enter into Covenant with him by the ministration of his Word and Sacraments.

THIS is the doctrine of the holy Apostles: their preaching, their writings, their sufferings, their miracles were all intended to persuade us, that the fatherly love of God, and the immortal blessings of his Kingdom, are to be obtained no otherwise but by the Knowledge and Faith of Jesus Christ; and they forbid us to trust to uncovenanted Mercies, and unrevealed ways of Salvation. And if any other, not only Man, but Angel, presume to preach a different Gospel, or method of Salvation, they pronounce him accursed.

BUT this different Gospel is certainly taught by those who say, that God is as much our Father upon the score of Creation as Redemption; that we can sufficiently know him by the light of natural reason; that he is bound to save us, if we walk in this light, and are good moral Men, tho' no good Christians. If this be true, there could be no need of Christ's coming into the World, to make an atonement for the sins of it, and to bring Life and Immortality to light through his Gospel; since, according to these men, God is at peace with us without Christ, and has written his Law in our hearts, whereby we may sufficiently serve and please him.

AND indeed the design of these men, who so highly magnify the laws and light of nature, as they stile it, is to render the Gospel of Christ of
none

none effect, to dissolve his Church and abolish his Religion, to lessen the majesty and honour of God, as if sin against him did not deserve that curse which the Scripture says they have brought upon mankind. By these men God is brought something lower, and man raised something higher than they are set forth in scripture characters. They love to fancy the Almighty as one of like passions and affections with themselves. And because they find no zeal in themselves at the voice of cursing and blasphemy, they perswade themselves that there is the same lenity in God; that he is not so tender of his honour and glory, as of the lives and flourishing estate of blasphemers, whom they punish and restrain no otherwise than *Eli* did his sons, with a little formal reproof, and that but rarely given. This Impunity they will needs ground upon the forbearance and long-suffering of God, not indeed as he is represented in Scripture, for there he is ever said to be jealous of the honour of his name, but according to the natural notions which they think they have of him. Such notions have opened a door to the most impudent Atheism and Contempts of God, for they have staid the hand of human justice from punishing such crimes, out of an opinion, that they do not affect the publick welfare, and should be left to the judgment of him against whom they are committed.

THESE are some of the reasons why we should beware of those who set up the light of nature against that of revelation. For as by such a light they see little of God, so by their mean discourses and reasoning about him, they bring his Majesty, Glory, and Honour to a low account in the World; they expose Religion to the outrages and insults of Atheists, so as to turn this Earth into a region

region of darkness: and no wonder, for even Heaven itself would shine no more, were it as destitute of zeal for the glory of God.

2dly, ANOTHER sort of men that we should take care not to follow, are those who allowing the Covenant of God in Christ to be divine, and necessary to Salvation, flatter themselves, that they are comprehended in it, and shall reap the benefit of it, tho' they are grossly deficient in the duties, which it enjoyns them.

It is much to be lamented, and it has been the occasion of all the great calamities in the World, that the Laws of God have been no more regarded by those who have received them, and engaged to obey them. But it has been the complaint of all ages, that the number of men truly fearing God and hating Iniquity, has been very scarce. The People of *Israel* were but a small nation in comparison of the World about them, as *Moses* observes in this very chapter whence my Text is taken; and yet how few, even of this small nation, were free from that stiff neck and untractable Spirit which would not bear the gentle yoke of God's Laws? Of all that came out of *Egypt*, above twenty years old, but two were found worthy to enter into the land of *Canaan*. And that generation which entered, quickly forgot the Law which *Moses* and *Joshua* with most earnest exhortations of their dying breath recommended to them. Afterwards, under their best Kings and most regular Government, the number of their truly good men was but like the gleaning of grapes after a vintage, as we may conclude from the *Psalms* and the *Prophets*. Nay, *Jeremiah* ch. v. challenges their great city *Jerusalem* to shew him a man that executed judgment and sought after the truth.

So that if we find them seldom blest with that health and peace, that plenty and victory which
are

are here promised; if we hear them often groaning under pestilence, famine and sword, we see the cause of their misfortune in their manners, and must justify the truth of God in all his dispensations towards them. For his promises and threatnings were all conditional. He set life and death before them, and put it into their own power to make themselves happy or miserable. Since they would needs disobey God, and were so plainly and constantly forewarned by him, that the consequences of their disobedience would prove fatal to them, they had nothing but their own perverseness to blame for it.

I wish the ages and nations of Christians had not too commonly imitated this perverse and gain-saying generation of *Jews*; for then they had not been so often consumed by the like punishments. We are in covenant with the same God, and may depend upon his Mercies, or dread his Judgments, according to our observance or non-observance of his Laws. Let no man fancy, as some have been apt to do, that the blessings of our religion are merely spiritual, consisting only in the inward joys of the soul, and the felicity of the future state. *St. Paul* thought otherwise, when he said, *Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promises of the present life, as well as of that which is to come.* And who can doubt but that the Laws of Christ are excellently adapted to obtain both, were they but duly established in christian Governments, and applied to the conduct both of publick and private life.

It is well observed by one of our ancient Fathers, that the primitive Christians made Truth and Justice so much the rule of their dealings, that they had no occasion for oaths to gain them credit: for they were so careful to speak the truth, that their bare word was esteemed as valid as any oath.

And in all their conversations, how familiar soever, they never gave a loose to their tongues, but governed them so, that no idle, unseemly, or disrespectful word might escape them. This ingenuous and modest spirit of our religion, says he, invited people of all nations and languages, of all ranks and conditions, to resort to our Sermons in the greatest multitudes, as teaching doctrines which far exceeded the precepts of their moral Philosophers, viz. How to moderate not only the cravings of the external senses, and refrain from intemperate actions, but to purifie the thoughts and intentions of the heart, not only to prune the branches of sinful lust, but to kill it in the root, and to strangle concupiscence in its first motions. They were charmed to hear our sacred Oracles instructing them how to bear the provocations of enemies with a firm unshaken mind, and not to meditate revenge, but to recompense injuries with friendly offices: to make the poor and needy partners with them in their happy circumstances: to treat all men with humanity, and to entertain strangers with as much kindness and hospitality as if they were our brethren.

WHAT an agreeable genius must such doctrines, when duly practised, as they were at first, produce in mankind? They recommended Christianity so much to the World, that it was quickly mounted to the helm of civil government, to the seat of imperial dignity. Where had it been preserved pure and sincere from the politicks of this wicked World, how many bloody battles, burnings of cities, ravagings of countries, particular murders, had been prevented? In what part of Christendom could lying, stealing, and all sorts of frauds and injustice, supported by innumerable perjuries, have grown so flagrant and frightful as we have known them,

them, had the laws of Christ been maintained and upheld against them? Could the overflowings of Impiety have thus prevailed over us, if the sense of the divine Majesty, his power and providence, his mercies and judgments, had been duly recognized and celebrated? Could the legions of darkness, the lusts of uncleanness, the monsters of gluttony and drunkenness, of pride and vanity, have gained such an ascendant, and become so fashionable that they are above reproof, if we had ordered our conversation by those rules of humility and modesty, of temperance and chastity, which the Gospel enjoins us as part of our christian Covenant?

SUCH breaches of our Covenant have exposed us to the judgments of an angry God, and often turned our joy into mourning, and our feasts into hunger and bitterness of soul. They cause the air to be unwholesome, the earth to be barren, the sea and winds to be tempestuous and contrary to us. They strengthen the hands of our enemies, and make all our adversaries to insult and triumph over us. They often kindle a devouring fire in our cities and habitations. They destroy the fruits of our fields, and the encrease of our flocks and herds. And they stop up the channels of our commerce, and reduce us to poverty and want. All these calamities are owing to the breaches of our Covenant with our God.

IF we were but true and faithful in our obedience to his laws, he would manifestly shew himself to be our gracious Saviour and Protector; he would lift up the light of his countenance upon us, and command all the elements, all his creatures to be favourable to us; he would open the storehouse of his mercies, and not suffer us to want any manner of thing that is good for us.

Fourth Sunday after EASTER. 279

IN any man ask me, how I know this? I answer, By the knowledge which I have of God's Laws, which have a natural tendency and fitness to procure this happiness for us: by the abundance of his promises, which belong as much to the present, as ever they did to the most ancient Church of God: and by the testimony of those who have experienced the blessed effects of such faithful obedience.

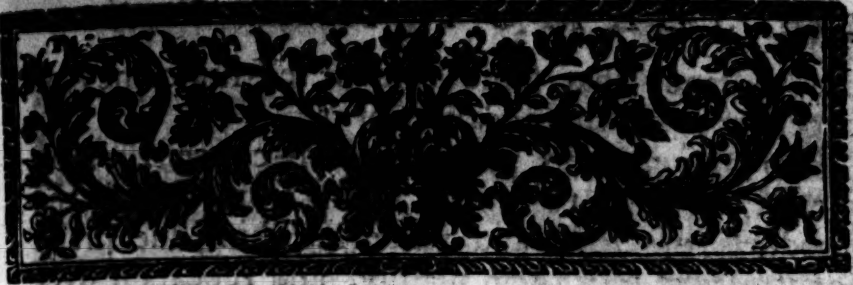
I confess such blessings have seldom been very entire or long lasting, by reason of the imperfection of mens obedience in the best of times; but they have always born a proportion to it. I believe there is scarce any serious man who has lived long in the World, in such circumstances as have led him to observe the state of it, but he will be able to say that he has seen the mercies and judgments of God dispensed amongst men according as their religion and manners have deserved. When he has been honoured, his favour has shone out in publick mercies; and when atheism and iniquity have abounded, he has visited them with the frowns and tokens of his displeasure: Exactly agreeable to his promises and threatnings in his holy Word.

To such promises and threatnings let us give awful attention, and believe that God speaks them to us, as truly and earnestly as he did to the People of *Israel*. At the same time let us consider that he reaches out the Tables of his holy Laws to us, saying, 'Behold, I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, in your obedience or transgression of these laws. These are the statutes and oracles whereby I have revealed my nature and attributes, my will and worship to you; take care to love and fear and serve me by these rules, and in so doing you will obtain my blessings to your selves and your children. For be assured that I am a faithful God, who

' keep covenant and mercy for ever with those
 ' that love me and obey my Commandments. I
 ' will love them, bless them, and multiply them;
 ' I will bless the fruit of their body, and of their
 ' land, their corn and wine and oyl; the increase
 ' of their kine, and the flocks of their sheep.
 ' They shall be blessed in the city and in the field;
 ' when they go out, and when they come in. I
 ' will smite their enemies when they rise up a-
 ' gainst them, and turn away the pestilence that
 ' it shall not destroy them.'

LET us be perswaded that God makes these
 promises to us, and let us not be such infidels as to
 question either his power or his will to perform
 them. Is not he as omnipresent, and as all-suffici-
 ent to help men, now as ever? Can his mercies
 fail, and his goodness be exhausted? His arm is
 not shortened, that it cannot protect us, nor his
 ear heavy that it cannot hear us: only let us re-
 frain from such iniquities as separate between us
 and our God, and from such sins as provoke him
 to hide his face from us. Let us keep Innocence,
 and take heed to do that which is right: speak-
 ing the truth, and shewing mercy, and walking
 with that humility which becomes the Gospel.

WE shall be inexcusable, we shall never be able
 to answer it to God, nor our own consciences, nor
 our children, if we bring down the Judgments of
 Heaven upon our land, when it is in our own
 power to avert them. And the averting of them
 is always in our own power. Fear God, and keep
 his Commandments, and then you may depend up-
 on the blessings of his Covenant. And they are
 the blessings of this life, and of that which is to
 come, which he hath granted us with the Son of
 his love, the Mediator of this Covenant, whom he
 hath given for our redemption, and with whom he
 can deny us nothing that pertains to life and hap-
 piness. To whom &c.



SERMON XXII.

On the Fifth Sunday after EASTER.



DEUTERONOMY ix. 6.

Understand therefore that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.

THE People of *Israel* being ready to pass over *Jordan*, and take possession of the promised land, which was full of fenced cities and walled towns, abounding with strong, gigantick, and warlike inhabitants; *Moses* encourages them not to be afraid, assuring them that the same God who had brought them out of *Egypt*, and carried them through the Wilderness with an invincible arm, would finish his work by subduing this People before them, and driving them out of their habitations.

BUT he warns them to take heed how they imputed their success to their own merits. He knew how apt the heart of man is to be exalted with prosperity, so as not to see the hand of God in it,

278 SERMON XXII. On the

but to fancy that some kind of self-sufficiency or excellency was the occasion of it.

To prevent this pride and self-conceit, which would be sure to hinder them from seeing the goodness of God, and rendering him due praise for it, *Moses* tells them plainly, and repeats it over and over again, that it was not for their righteousness that God gave them the possession of *Canaan*; but for the wickedness of the old Inhabitants he drove them out, and for his oath's sake which he had sworn to the Patriarchs, he planted *Israel* in their room.

So that there were two reasons of this great Revolution in *Canaan*.

I. THE abominable wickedness of the *Canaanites*, which was great in the days of *Abraham*, four hundred and thirty years before this time, and had been growing apace ever since, till it came to that fulness which now caused the evil-doers to be destroyed and rooted out from the face of the earth.

WHEN the Scripture says, that the measure of their sins was filled up, the meaning is, that all sorts and conditions of men among them were guilty of all the sins, natural and unnatural, which mankind are capable of committing: detestable idolatries, diabolical forceries, fraudulent and corrupt dealings, open oppression and violence, and such a deluge of carnal lusts as sunk them much below the dignity of human nature, and made them viler even than the brute beasts which have no understanding. This character of them we may collect from several passages of the writings of *Moses*; from whence we may likewise conclude, that all their People were guilty of these sins, either by actual commission, or approbation of them. Their mighty men were mighty enemies of all sorts of serious piety and true virtue. God had

had long waited to see if any man would arise among them, who was worthy the name of a Reformer and good Governour, who would enact good laws, and execute them effectually. But when he saw, that every new generation was trained up in the sins of their fore-fathers, and aggravated them with many additions of their own, then he poured out the vials of his wrath upon them, and consumed them as brands fit for nothing but the fire.

II. THIS Revolution was brought about, in order to accomplish the Promise which God had made to *Abraham*, who was a man of a heavenly Spirit, and loved God above all things, above his father's house, above his own life, above the life of his son *Isaac*: in all which respects he was tried, and made full proof of his piety, that God could lay no command upon him, which he would not readily obey. In recompense of which obedience God promised to give him the land of *Canaan* for an Inheritance. He told him indeed, that he could not put him into the present possession of it, because the iniquity of the *Amorites* was not then full, they were not yet ripe for destruction; but that his posterity should certainly have the enjoyment of it.

AND this Promise is often alledged by *Moses*, as the ground of all the wonderful works which God wrought for *Israel*, and why he chose them before all nations of the earth for his peculiar People, not only to establish them in the land of *Canaan*, but to place his name and worship among them, to constitute them the guardians and fountain of true Religion, where it should be preserved till that Seed of *Abraham* should come in whom it was decreed that all nations of the earth should be blessed; by whose ministry the word of the Lord should go out of *Sion*, and his worship from

Jerusalem, and enlighten the dark corners of the World with the knowledge of the true God, and the way of everlasting Salvation. This is the reason why *Israel* was brought with so many miracles into *Canaan*; not so much for the inheritance of that country, as to answer that other part of the Promise made to their ancestor, that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed; and so we are to understand it in this chapter and other places, where it is said, that God brought *Israel* hither, that he might perform the word which he sware to their fathers. So it was understood by *Zacharias* father of *John Baptist*, when, in contemplation of the approaching nativity of our Lord, he blessed God for performing his promised Mercy, and remembering his Covenant, even the Oath which he had sworn to their fathers.

THUS the wickedness of the *Canaanites* was the cause of their loss; and the reason of *Israel's* succeeding in their possessions, was the favour which God had to their pious Ancestors, and the Covenant which he had made with them, to give their posterity this very land. But as for those *Israelites* who travelled with *Moses* in the Wilderness, we hear what a character he gives of them in my Text. *The Lord*, says he, *doth not give you the possession of Canaan, for your righteousness; for ye are a stiff-necked, self-willed, untractable people.* This was a reproach which was often cast upon them; and how well they deserved it, is proved in this chapter. *Remember*, says he, *and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, till ye came to this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord.* This charge he proves by an induction of several passages of their manners, particularly that of the Golden-calf, which was a most audacious and astonishing act of rebellion

lion against God. For they framed this Idol for their deity and leader to *Canaan*, as they publickly profess, even at *Horeb*, and that but a few weeks after they had seen the Glory of God, and heard him proclaim his law with an audible voice, with the solemnity of thunder and lightning, and the sound of a trumpet; in the beginning of which Law he strictly forbid them to make any figure or similitude of the Deity: and they agreed, saying, *We will do according to all that the Lord our God commands us*: and these words they presently ratified with sacrifice. Now after such serious and sacred transactions, so quickly to break the Covenant which they had just made with God, to violate it in such a gross and scandalous manner; what could be more provoking? If they had been tolerably obedient in all other instances, yet this alone was sufficient to bring them under the imputation which *Moses* here lays upon them, of a stiff-necked and rebellious People: a People who had no merit to plead for any of God's favours, much less for his gracious leading and conducting them, after this sin, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

Upon this occasion *Moses* tells them how he acted. He came down from the mount with the two Tables of the Law in each hand; and when he came into the Camp of *Israel*, and saw the Abomination which they had committed, he threw the Tables out of his hands, and brake them before their eyes. These Tables being written with the finger of God, it is not probable that *Moses* broke them of his own meer motion and indignation at his Peoples sin. For tho' it became him in such circumstances to testify the greatest concern for the violated honour of God; yet to have made so free with the sacred Tables, without a higher authority than his own for so doing, would have

have favoured of a culpable rashness and indiscreet zeal. And therefore I conclude with some learned men, that God directed him to do this before he came out of the divine Presence in the mount. For there we find the Almighty apprizes him of the sin which the People had committed in his absence: and he tells him of his purpose to destroy them for it, and to blot out their name from under Heaven, and to make him a greater and mightier nation than they. Having said this, he bids him go down to them quickly, to acquaint them, no doubt, with this resolution, and to break the Tables before their faces, to intimate thereby, that since they had broken their Covenant with God, his obligations towards them were dissolved, that since they had renounced their God, he had rejected them from being his People. This agrees with what followed hereupon. For *Moses* quickly returned to God in the mount, and fell down before him, and interceded for the offenders with long fasting and ardent supplications and prayers, begging of him, for the honour of his name among the *Gentiles*, who had heard of his Promises to this People, and for the sake of their Ancestors to whom he had made them, not to be so far offended with this their heinous wickedness as to destroy them for it. By which intercession God was pacified at that time, and condescended to renew his Covenant with *Israel*, upon two other Tables of stone, without expressing any displeasure at *Moses* for having broken the first. Whence we conclude that he broke them by the divine Appointment, for the reason I have mentioned.

AND this was enough to shew what little reason *Israel* had to flatter themselves, or to suffer so much as a thought to whisper in their hearts, that God gave them the land of *Canaan* as the reward of their religious and upright walking with him.

Fifth Sunday after EASTER. 283

The history of the Golden-calf was enough to strike them dumb, and shame them for ever out of such vain boasting; for which purpose *Moses* here brings it to their remembrance. *Understand therefore that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it, for thy righteousness: for thou art a stiff-necked people.*

IF it be said, that in these very writings of *Moses*, the *Israelites* are sometimes styled a *holy People*, which might warrant them to claim some kind of merit to themselves: I answer; they might be called *holy*, not upon the account of any merit or righteousness of their own; but 1st, As they were God's Church, educated and trained up in the only Religion upon earth, which deserved the name of a holy Worship. 2^{dly}, As they were in covenant with a holy God, and under his immediate direction and government, whose Laws tended to make men holy in all manner of conversation. 3^{dly}, As they were sprung from the holy Patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*. But this was a relative, not a personal holiness. And in the two first respects, their holiness, whatever it were, was owing to the special grace and favour of God, and communicated to them so, as that they might be styled holy, without any merit or worthiness which they could call their own.

THEIR being enlightened with the knowledge of the true God, educated in his worship, instructed in his laws, were all proper means to make them the best of People. How they had profited under such means, we hear in this chapter. Their behaviour was such as merited punishment rather than reward, as every impartial Reader must see, tho' *Moses* had not said it. And therefore it was just in him to upbraid them for their unworthiness, and to let them know that they were far from deserving to be masters of the land of *Canaan*.

BUT

284 SERMON XXII. *On the*

BUT perhaps their pedigree, their communion with God, and the kind words and compellations which he often vouchsafed them, might fill them with an opinion, that they had an indefeasible right to the divine Blessings, and that their heavenly Father, like some weak Parents, conceived a fondness for disobedient children. Some of these conceits must have possessed their minds, otherwise *Moses*, who writ nothing in vain, would never have cautioned them, with so much earnestness, that he repeats and inculcates it upon them, to take heed, that when they were settled in *Canaan*, and eat and drank of the fat of the land, they should not grow proud upon it, and forget God, and carry it with such an air, as if their own worthiness or good fortune had obtained it for them.

MOSES forewarns them of this vanity, and preaches to them and us at the same time, a needful doctrine of humility and modesty. Men are extremely fond of *sacrificing to their own net, and burning incense to their own dragg*, as the Prophet speaks; and the worse they are, the more of self-sufficiency they arrogate to themselves. *Israel* thought, or was in danger of thinking, that the kingdom of *Canaan* was theirs, by virtue of their election in their Ancestors to be the People of God, without any consideration of their obedience to his Laws. Why how many people have built their title to a heavenly *Canaan* upon no better ground than a strong conceit that they have been the elect children of God, and that therefore their title to it is ensured by an immutable decree? Multitudes of sinners have supported themselves upon this perswasion, spending the time of their sojourning here agreeably to their carnal lusts and interests; and at the end of their course they have laid down their heads upon the soft and easie pillow

pillow of Election, hoping by vertue of their imaginary enrollment amongst the Saints of God, they should find a safe passage to the port of everlasting felicity.

It was the modesty of the good old Patriarch Jacob, to acknowledge, when God had greatly multiplied and encreased his substance, that he was not worthy of the least of the divine Mercies. If his posterity had retained the same spirit, and been the true heirs of his piety and virtue, they would not have wanted so many precautions as Moses gave them, to remember God and themselves in the days of their prosperity; to consider how many wonderful Blessings and signal Deliverances God had vouchsafed them, and how many gross acts of impiety and rebellion they had committed against him. If the humility of old *Israel* had descended upon the Tribes who were called by his name, we had never heard of such passages as these, which their great Legislator has recorded of them. *Jesurun waxed fat and kicked; he forgot God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. Of the rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.* This great Prophet foresaw, for God had revealed it to him, that when the People should be possessed of the promised Land, and enjoyed the abundance of it, they would turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke their Maker, and break his Covenant.

‘TAKE therefore, says he, this book of the
‘Law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the
‘Covenant, that it may be there for a witness a-
‘gainst thee. For I know thy rebellion and thy
‘stiff neck: Behold, while I am yet alive with
‘you this day, ye have been rebellious against the
‘Lord;

286 SERMON XXII. On the

‘Lord, and how much more after my death?
 ‘Gather unto me all the Elders of your Tribes,
 ‘and your officers, that I may speak these words
 ‘in their ears, and call heaven and earth to re-
 cord against them. For I know that after my
 death, ye will utterly corrupt your selves, and
 turn aside from the way which I have com-
 manded you: and evil will befall you in the
 latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight
 of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through
 the work of your hands.’

WHAT a Barewell was this, may some say, to
 come out of the mouth of so meek a man as Mo-
 ses? Nay rather, what a People had he to deal
 with, whose spirit and temper he perfectly knew
 by the experience of forty years, and all that time
 had been labouring for their welfare with the
 greatest sincerity and good affection? to how lit-
 tle purpose, he here declares; and the ensuing
 histories assure us, that he had a true foresight of
 their future behaviour; for they acted just as he
 had foretold of them.

Now these men had a righteousness of their
 own, very different from the righteousness of God.
i. e. they were perswaded that their own ways
 were as right as his, and much more easie and a-
 greeable to lead them to their desired ends. When
 he forbid them to make any graven Image, they
 said in their hearts, What harm is there in such
 an Image? When he told them, he would not
 rain Manna on the Sabbath-day, they said, Why
 might it not rain on that day as well as on another?
 When he commanded them to sacrifice, they ask-
 ed, to what purpose? why might not they do as
 well without it? When he told them the danger
 of contracting alliances with the *Canaanites*; they
 conceived there was no such danger in it, but ra-
 ther a necessity for it, if they would reap the ad-
 vantages

advantages of a good neighbourhood; and by this intimacy they might gain many of them over to their own laws and religion.

THESE men were Free-thinkers, which is but another name for humourfome and conceited People, who dispute every thing which is offered by others, and deem every law an imposition, which has not their consent to the making of it. They thought their own will and way as good as another's, and they would follow it, and trust to the success of it. This humour may be intimated by the word *Righteousness* here in my Text. When these men came to be established in *Canaan*, they might reflect upon their behaviour in the Wilderness, and say to one another in their conversations, 'We disputed with *Moses* at such and such places, and contested the reason of his commands and injunctions; and yet notwithstanding his angry speeches and threatnings, we are safely arrived to the end of our Travels, and are settled here in peace; so that we were in the right to assert our liberty.

THIS is the common plea of all Libertines: they many times prosper in the World, and then they argue from such prosperity, that all their doings have been right, and that those who would confine them within the bounds of religion and virtue, seek to usurp authority over them, in order to make their own advantages of them. And others are encouraged by their success, to say and do the same things, and so the World is filled with Libertinism. *Moses* seems to have apprehended, that his People would use this way of reasoning; and therefore he takes care to prevent the effects of it: 'You shall have your *Canaan*, but do not mistake the means which bring you to the possession of it: do not think that your carriage and conduct in the Wilderness hath deserved it.

‘ it. No: the wickedness of the present inhabitants, and the faithfulness of God in his promises to your Ancestors, make you lords of *Canaan*. As for your selves, your demerits are such as would for ever have excluded you from it.’

THIS was the righteousness of that Generation; and they transmitted it down to their late descendants the Scribes and Pharisees, who constantly did their own will and pleasure, under colour of doing the will of God. And their colouring consisted in a great ostentation of saying their prayers, giving small alms, in a formal dress and demure looks, and other petty observances of the Law, while they passed over the substantial duties of it, Justice and Mercy, and the Love of God. With this cheap and partial righteousness they cheated their own souls, so far as to believe, that they were the greatest favourites of God, and that it was impossible for them to miss of the Kingdom of Heaven: or if any of them should fall into the place of torments, that *Abraham* himself would come and rescue them out of it, as being his children. Such confidence had they in the merits of a superficial righteousness, or to call it by its proper name, in a gross hypocrisie.

WORTHY heirs of that Generation spoken of in my Text! their righteousness was of a piece, and their rewards corresponded. Both had the enjoyments of an earthly *Canaan*; but the word of truth shuts them out from that which is above; for it affirms, that except our righteousness exceed theirs, we shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nor shall the righteousness of Ancestors avail there, as it did in the case before us. For as *Ezekiel* says of *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, so may we say of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, *They shall deliver neither sons nor daughters by their righteousness in the day of judgment, but they only shall be delivered themselves.*

THE

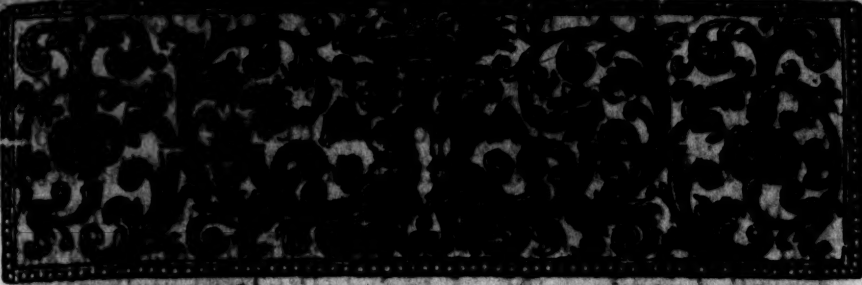
THE righteousness of a stiff-necked People, what is it, but that which seems right in their own eyes? The argument of a strong hand, a sharp scourge, may compel them, and that but sometimes, to go out of their way, and comply with their duty. But remove this, and leave them to their choice, and they certainly follow their own inclinations, without any fear of God or regard of man. If it were possible for such spirits to be admitted into Heaven, they would soon fill it with wild disorder, and make it as miserable as any place upon earth. And therefore happy is it for those that shall enter into it, that a higher degree of righteousness is necessary for it.

To this degree of righteousness let us all aspire; and let us begin with mortifying that cursed pride which is the bane of it, and shows it self in divers shapes, in our fondness of vain delights, in our preferring the doing of our own will above all things, in our deafness to good admonitions, in our conceit of our own wisdom, in our making a scorn and jest of serious things. These wicked affections are all the daughters of pride, which we must divorce and utterly abandon, otherwise we shall never attain to that degree of righteousness which I am recommending. For it is a composition of piety, meekness, and humility, of the love and fear of God, and a resolution to obey his Word. The Psalmist shews us the foundation of this righteousness, *Psal. cxxxi.* when he says; *Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks. I do not exercise my self in great matters, which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother: yea my soul is even as a weaned child.* The very same ground of it is laid in that Gospel, where our blessed Lord assures us, that every one that will enter into his Kingdom, must become as

a little child, divested of self-conceit and self-love, with a mind discharged of those erroneous notions which ill custom and education have infused into it; apt to learn, and obedient to discipline.

LET us hear him, who lays this foundation of Righteousness, and builds the whole superstructure upon it, by destroying that pride which separates between us and our God, by inspiring us with that meekness and humility which prepares our hearts to walk in the straight way and narrow path of life, which disposes us to deny our carnal reasonings and corrupt inclinations, and to hunger and thirst after the knowledge of the divine Will, and prefer the doing of it above all things; and when we have performed it with our utmost diligence, to call our selves unprofitable servants, and confess that we have done no more than what was our duty to do, and be so sensible of our imperfections, as to pray, that when our works come to be tried, and our fate determined in the great Judgment, we may be found cloathed, not with the raggs of our own righteousness, but with the robe of his merits, whom God hath made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. To him, with &c.





SERMON XXIII.

On the Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY.

~~DEUTERONOMY xiii. 1, 2, 3.~~
DEUTERONOMY xiii. 1, 2, 3.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder: And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods (which thou hast not known) and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

GOD having enacted a body of Laws for the government of his People, like a wise Legislator he takes care in the next place to enforce the observance of them, by declaring what punishments should be inflicted on those who offended against them.

AND first of all, he declares it to be death for any one to offer to seduce his People to the worship of strange gods. Let such Seducer's character be never so great, he was to dye without mercy; and even by the hands of his nearest relations and dearest friends. No bonds of nature, marriage, or friendship were to be pleaded as a sufficient reason for sparing him, but every man's hand was to be lifted up against him to put him to death.

Now suppose this Seducer has for a long time maintained the character of a holy Prophet, a man of a divine Spirit, to whom God has communicated his Will by supernatural dreams and visions. Suppose he has prophesied of what should happen in the World, and his predictions have really come to pass: Suppose he has done every thing that seems possible for the greatest Prophet to do; yet if at last he abuses his gifts, abilities, and reputation to mis-lead men to a false religion, to the worship of Images, or any creatures in heaven or earth, his prophetick character shall not give credit to such doctrine; let him say and do as great things as he will, yet while he teaches rebellion against the one true God, he is a Deceiver, and shall surely be put to death.

How far the World of Spirits, or the Prophets of a false Religion may work miracles and foretell things to come, is a great question. That they may have these powers in some degree and measure, is here supposed; and that in fact they have exercised them at some times must be confessed, except we will deny the truth of all history. *Pharaoh's* Magicians imitated some of the miracles of *Moses*, tho' in a much inferior degree. They turned their rods into serpents, but his quickly destroyed them and swallowed them all up. The witch of *Endor* brought up such a shape as appeared to King *Saul* to be the true *Samuel*.

Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY. 223

IN the new Testament we have a caveat given us by our Lord to beware of false Christs and false Prophets, which should shew such signs and wonders, as would deceive even the elect children of God, if it were possible for them to be deceived, *i. e.* if they were not secured from it by the special care and favour of God. In St. Paul's *2 Thess.* ii. 9. he apprises us of the coming of a great Antichrist into the World, the same which St. John saw, *Rev.* xiii. whose appearance was *with great power, and signs, and lying wonders*; causing fire to come down from Heaven upon the Earth in the sight of men, and giving life to the dead image of the beast, so that it spake, and made the spectators to admire and adore it.

SUCH Antichrists have appeared in divers ages and parts of the World. *Simon Magus* may be reckoned as the first of them; who so bewitched the People of *Samaria* with his Sorceries, that they accounted him something more than a man, and called him *the great Power of God*. And tho' the particular things which he did are not mentioned, yet we must suppose them to have been very extraordinary and astonishing, otherwise the *Samaritans*, from the least to the greatest, would never have crowded about him, as we read they did, *Acts* viii. Not long after him lived *Apollo-nius*, born at *Tyana* a city of *Cappadocia*, a professed Idolater, and yet reported by *Philostratus* the writer of his life, to have foretold many events which afterwards came to pass, and to have done many miraculous works. And indeed the histories of antient and modern Idolaters are full of narratives to the same purpose.

THE reason is, because evil Spirits are very predominant in heathen Countries, and enable Magicians and other their votaries to know and do many things which are above the power and ordi-

nary course of nature, and yet are far from being arguments of any omniscience or omnipotence in the authors of them. For they are all finite Beings, and cannot exceed those bounds which the supreme Lord of all has assigned them. But since he permits them to tyrannize over those People whom they have debauched by their wicked temptations, it is no wonder that they can acquaint a man who converses familiarly with them, of any thing that is doing, or was very lately done in a place so remote, that no human means could bring the tydings of it in so short a time. No wonder, if when they are permitted and authorized by God to bring calamities upon sinful men, they are able to foretell what sort of calamities they shall be, and at what time inflicted. But yet they have often wanted either the power or the will to give men a true foresight and warning of their fate; for that might have put the sufferers in a way to have prevented their own ruin, which was contrary to the will and design of these wicked instruments. They might have foretold *Abab* that he should fall at *Ramoth-Gilead*; for this was revealed to them; but they were lying Spirits in the mouths of his Prophets, and told him a contrary story, how he should prevail against the *Syrians*, that they might animate him to go to his own destruction. They foretold how *Julius Cæsar* should be assassinated upon the Ides of *March*; which was impossible for them to be ignorant of; for the plot had been concerting long before it was executed, and they who are in with all mischievous designs, knew as much of it as any of the Conspirators. But then they had formerly given out a contrary prediction, that this same *Cæsar* should dye in his bed, in a good old age: So that while they sought to get credit by telling the truth, they secured the issue of their plot

Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY. 295

plot by a lye; for *Cæsar* depended upon the first prediction, and so neglected the second.

It was pretty much a custom among the old *Romans* and *Grecians*, for one that was afflicted with a lingering illness, to go and sleep in the Temple of *Æsculapius*, their imaginary god of physick, expecting to have a cure revealed to him in a dream. And there are attestations upon record, that some patients had their expectations answered. Tho' if we may believe *Arnobius* a christian writer, they were generally disappointed; for, says he, where one or two were cured, thousands received no help, but rather grew worse upon it. However, if they had been cured for the most part, no more could have been concluded from it, but this, that the Spirit whom they invoked by the name of *Æsculapius*, had the skill of an expert Physician; which that it is very possible, none will deny.

BUT, as learned men have collected from history, these Spirits could not foretell future events which depended upon the will of free agents, and were not left by Providence to the direction and management of such Spirits. Concerning the knowledge of such Events God challenges them by the Prophet *Isaiah* xli. 22. *Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.* This knowledge is too wonderful and excellent for any creature to attain to. If the oracles of the Heathen have sometimes hit upon such future contingencies, it has been but by a lucky chance, or by such conjectures as a wise man might make, comparing causes with their effects, and concluding what may happen again, from what has formerly happened.

How much they were in the dark as to these things, appears from the uncertainty of their an-

swers, which they delivered in ambiguous terms, on purpose to leave it to the enquirers to take that sense which should be most agreeable to the success of their affairs. They owned there was a Fate above them which over-ruled them: which was as much as to say, they did not know the will and pleasure of the most high God; and was in effect an acknowledgment, *that he frustrateth the tokens of the lyars, and maketh diviners mad; he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish, Isa. xlv. 25.*

THUS much I have said to shew wherein the great strength of false prophets lies; that by the assistance of evil Spirits they may foretell some things, and perform some strange and wonderful works, which cannot be done by any natural means. And tho' there be nothing of the finger of God in such things, and sharp-sighted men may see thro' them; yet because they may impose upon plain, honest, well-meaning People, the goodness of God has given these people another way, and a very sure one, whereby to judge of such Prophets, and to satisfy themselves that they come not from him: and that is, by weighing and examining their doctrine. If they teach a doctrine which is subversive of any part of the moral Law, if they encourage men to do any thing which is injurious to the honour and glory of God, if they set up any Idol for men to worship, whether it be visible or invisible, the work of the hand, or the imagination of the heart; such teachers and guides are false Prophets: no matter how grave their carriage, how serious their looks, how manifold their gifts, how eminent their parts and abilities are; if they advance a law which is contrary to the Law of God, they are his enemies, and do what they can to depose him from his government of the World.

AND

AND the readiest way to find them out, is to examine their doctrines by the rule of God's Word. This *Moses* and the Prophets make the standard and touchstone of all doctrines. *To the law and to the testimony*, says *Isaiah*, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light nor truth in them. This rule may be easily learned by all People. The ten Commandments are so short and plain, that they neither burden the memory, nor perplex the understanding. They require nothing but an honest heart to apply them to practice in all religious and civil cases. How plainly do the two first shew us the unlawfulness of Polytheism and Idolatry, and secure us against the peril of those temptations which may be offered us by such Seducers as are noted in my Text? If they lead you into the practice of idolatry, never regard all the protestations they shall make of their intentions to be pious and right in their worship of the Deity. Their practice is so contrary to the word and will of God, that the most subtile reasonings of men will never be able to reconcile them. And therefore those who own the divine authority of this Word, and will notwithstanding set up graven Images in their places of worship, shew some kind of modesty in leaving out of their Catechisms that Commandment which forbids them: it being such a glaring contradiction to their practice, that it is not fit to be inculcated on the minds of those People, who are bred up in the daily breach of it.

BUT tho' this practice is contrary to the Commandment, yet it is said to be authorized by many signs and wonders, about which several volumes have been written; but where is the necessity of them? A word to the wise. Tho' many impostures have passed for miracles in the defence of image worship, yet we will not scruple to grant that

that some facts have really been what they were said to be. I think we are fully warranted both by *Moses* and by *Christ*, to allow that such wonders may be wrought, and yet utterly to reject the doctrine which they are brought to confirm. If that doctrine be plainly contrary to any part of the revealed Will of God, the cause of it is deplorable, notwithstanding such evidences; it is condemned by the words of my Text, which command us to adhere to the Law of God's own declaration, to be sure that he cannot deny or contradict himself, to obey him rather than man, to have more veneration for the Law published at mount *Horeb*, than for the opposite doctrines of any meer man, how considerable soever, tho' he had the reputation of a Prophet, or person favoured with divine Revelations, and could produce even miraculous credentials to give authority to the doctrine he taught.

I will not dissemble the objection of the *Jews*, who urge this very Text against our blessed Lord, and justify themselves by it for putting him to death. I doubt not but their Ancestors had an eye to it, when they alledged at his tryal before *Pilate*, that they had a law, by which he ought to dye, because he made himself the Son of God. But this was begging the question, as we call it, and taking that for granted, which they should have proved. They suppose by this insinuation, that he was not the Son of God; but what if he was, in that transcendent sense which he asserts, and which his followers have all along proved from the ancient Scriptures, that he must needs be? then all their accusation falls to the ground. What if he was that Prophet spoken of by *Moses*, *Deut. xviii.* which he says the Lord their God would raise up to them to be a Legislator like to himself? then he could not be that Prophet which
he

he speaks of here in my Text. For Moses expressly distinguishes them, that we may be sure not to confound them. *To the prophet which God will raise up,* says he, *thou shalt hearken;* but to the prophet spoken of in my Text, he says, *thou shalt not hearken.* God's Prophet was to be agreeable to the desires of the People, which they expressed at hearing the law from Horeb. *Oh, said they, this great fire will consume us. Let us not bear the voice of God speaking out of the fire: but speak thou to us all that the Lord our God shall speak to thee; and we will hear it, and do it.* God was pleased with this Address, and answered graciously, *'tis well spoken.* 'They shall have a Prophet like Moses; and I will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him. And whoever hearkens not to my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. But the Prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak; or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that Prophet shall dye. And if thou say in thy heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a Prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously.'

HERE we have the characters of a true and false Prophet opposed to each other. In which we may observe, that to make a true Prophet two things are required. 1st, That he speak in the name of the Lord. 2^{dly}, That his sayings come to pass. For if his saying or prediction should be fulfilled, and he spake not in the name of the Lord: or if he spake in his name, but could not prove

prove his Mission by proper facts, he was not to be received for a true Prophet.

BUT now both these parts of the true Prophet's character are easily proved to have met in our Lord. For 1st, He spake in the name of the God of *Israel* with eminent zeal and constancy, teaching and pressing his hearers to love this God in the first place with all the heart and soul and strength and mind, and assuring them that he came not to destroy one tittle of what was written in the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill every thing. And he made it his business to purge the temple, reform the religion, magnifie the honour and glory of this God, to make his name known in all the World: to turn the *Gentiles* from their darkness to his light, and from their errors and delusions to his truth.

2^{dly}, ALL our Lord's sayings were fulfilled, whether they were authoritative, or prophetick. Whatever he commanded to be done, whether it were to cast out evil spirits, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to still the winds, to multiply food for hungry multitudes, the effect presently followed upon his speaking the word. And whatever he foretold of himself, of his Disciples, of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, of the propagation of his Gospel, all his predictions were accomplished in the time and manner as he had prefignified. So that our Lord had all the marks and credentials of a true Prophet.

BUT still the great stumbling-block of the *Jews* and other adversaries of Christianity is this: That our Saviour taught his Apostles to baptize and admit disciples into his Religion, by a profession of Faith in three persons of the Godhead, which was a doctrine not known before his time, and seems contrary to the writings of *Moses* and the Prophets. Now how far this doctrine was unknown

to men before our christian Revelation, I cannot take upon me to determine. Some think it was known to several eminent Saints and Servants of God. This is certain, that Christ and his followers ground it upon several passages of the old Testament, which cannot come properly before us at this time. I need urge no more at present, but that passage which I quoted out of *Deut. xviii.* and argue from it, that if Christ was the great Prophet there promised, as we Christians have always insisted, and our opponents have never disproved, then we are bound by a command which God lays upon us in that very place, to hearken to him in every thing, and to receive all his words as the dictates and revelation of God. Then we can be in no danger of being mis-led by him in any thing that relates to the divine Nature and Worship. Nay we are assured by several ancient Scriptures, that this great Prophet should make farther discoveries of the divine Nature, Word, and Will, than had ever been made to mankind before. This office of the Messiah was acknowledged by that generation wherein he appeared. For we hear them call him *that great prophet which should come into the World*, and they say, *When Christ cometh, he will teach us all things*; which saying intimates, that they expected from him new revelations of God and heavenly things. And indeed he could not have resembled *Moses* in his prophetick office, without such an intimate communion as he had with the divine Majesty, and without mediating, as he did, a new Covenant betwixt God and men, according to the most received and most natural interpretation of this Promise. What need many words? If we can say our Creed with sincerity; if we believe Christ to be the Son of God, after such a manner as that he is of the same substance: if we believe his passion, resur-

rection

rection, and ascension into Heaven, as we there confess, we can have no dispute about the truth of any of his Doctrines, since he who is the teacher is God of God, and came from the bosom of his Father to make him known unto men.

Thus we have considered the rules which *Moses* gives us to distinguish between true and false Prophets: and when we are acquainted with the rules, we may readily see the men who walk agreeably or contrary to them. And we may safely judge of them, whether they fear God or not. For our rules are the word of infallible truth: and our great master, who warns us against censuring and judging of others rashly, yet tells us, we may be sure to know false prophets by what they say, and what they do. Tho' they appear in sheeps cloathing, and carry a fair plausible outside, yet we may discover that which is within, by their doctrines and their works.

How much it concerns us to be zealous for the honour of God, and the glory of his name, and to guard against corruptions in religion, especially against those gross violations of it, atheism and idolatry, we are abundantly instructed in this chapter whence my Text is taken: where we find the divine Law ordained, that those who taught rebellion against God should be put to death without mercy, even by the hands of their nearest neighbours, friends, and relations. And if a city were infected with idolatry, and the inhabitants let it pass without punishment; then the publick forces were to be sent against it, to destroy every thing that had breath, both man and beast, with the edge of the sword. And they were to gather all the spoil of it, into a heap in the street, and burn it together with the city, and take order that it should lye in ruins as a perpetual monument of Impiety, and never be re-built again.

Now

Sunday after ASCENSION-DAY. 393

Now if any man think this was too severe, let him consider what executions are commonly done upon people for the preservation of temporal Governments, and how many lives are sacrificed to put a stop to a rising sedition or rebellion, or any crime which is inconsistent with the publick welfare; and all agreeable to those rules of good policy, which teach that it is best to suppress evil in the beginning, to stop any infectious distemper before it spread, to cut off a rotten member in order to save the whole body.

THESE severities are often put in practice, as absolutely necessary to preserve our natural life and good estate in many cases: and why may not the like methods be used to cure our spiritual evils? Is the soul of man the only part of him which deserves no care? Is the divine Majesty the only Being who deserves no honour and reverence? When I look upon this xiiith of *Deuteronomy*, and other sacred oracles, where the wrath of God is revealed, and the penalty of death denounced against atheism, idolatry, and blasphemy, I cannot help thinking that those who are for letting such sins pass without due and timely correction, are not sound in their belief of the divine providence, the immortality of the soul, the last judgment, and the rewards and punishments consequent upon it, as revealed in Scripture. I am sure they are far short of that zeal for God's glory which is here recommended; and tho' they may not be associates with other men in these sins, yet they will be partners with them in their punishments, for want of expressing a zeal against them, and using their endeavours to restrain them. For God has two ways of correcting these sins. First he leaves it to men, as in this chapter, to vindicate the honour of his Laws; which if they neglect to do, then he arises and visits them with his own immediate Judgments. SOME

SOME perhaps may think, that atheism, idolatry, and blasphemy, are not so heinous and provoking to God under the Gospel, as they were under the Law. But this thought can arise from nothing but lukewarmness and indifferency in the cause of religion. St. Paul teaches us a quite contrary doctrine, *Heb. x. 28. He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?* If we would rightly compute our own interests, we should find that piety towards God is the best security even of our present welfare. For where his name is most honoured, and his word regarded, there he chiefly delights to dwell, and to dispense the blessings of his favour and loving-kindness. There men make conscience of their social duties, and are most obedient to their governours, most upright in their dealings, most beneficent and well-affected one towards another. On the other hand, every atheistical liver, and especially every lewd, prophane, cursing and swearing tongue, brings a blemish and contempt upon religion, turns the Author of our blessings into an angry Judge, and drives away that good Spirit which alone can inspire our hearts with the fore-mentioned graces and virtues.

To conclude then: Let us hearken to the voice of the Lord our God, to keep all his Commandments, and to do that which is right in his eyes, that he may turn away from the fierceness of his anger, and shew us mercy, and have compassion on us, and bless us and our children both in this life and that which is to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom &c.

SERMON



SERMON XXIV.

On WHITSUNDAY.



ISAIAH XI. 1, 2.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

S this Prophet begins his Book with a severe Invective against the sins of his people, so he assures them that he saw the sword of divine vengeance brandished over their heads, and he often names the *Assyrian* for the hand which should strike with it. And indeed he lived to see his own Prophecy fulfilled. For after *Israel* and *Judah* had, by their mutual quarrels, weakned one another, the Kings of *Assyria* invaded them, and made a prey of them both. First, *Tiglath Pileser* spoiled the lands of *Zebulun* and *Nephthali*.

SOME perhaps may think, that atheism, idolatry, and blasphemy, are not so heinous and provoking to God under the Gospel, as they were under the Law. But this thought can arise from nothing but lukewarmness and indifferency in the cause of religion. St. Paul teaches us a quite contrary doctrine, *Heb. x. 28. He that despised Moses's law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?* If we would rightly compute our own interests, we should find that piety towards God is the best security even of our present welfare. For where his name is most honoured, and his word regarded, there he chiefly delights to dwell, and to dispense the blessings of his favour and loving-kindness. There men make conscience of their social duties, and are most obedient to their governours, most upright in their dealings, most beneficent and well-affected one towards another. On the other hand, every atheistical liver, and especially every lewd, prophane, cursing and swearing tongue, brings a blemish and contempt upon religion, turns the Author of our blessings into an angry Judge, and drives away that good Spirit which alone can inspire our hearts with the fore-mentioned graces and virtues.

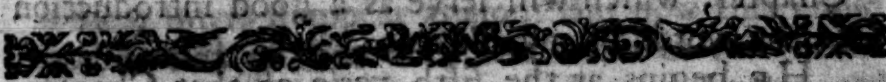
To conclude then: Let us hearken to the voice of the Lord our God, to keep all his Commandments, and to do that which is right in his eyes, that he may turn away from the fierceness of his anger, and shew us mercy, and have compassion on us, and bless us and our children both in this life and that which is to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom &c.

SERMON



SERMON XXIV.

On WHITSUNDAY.



ISAIAH xi. 1, 2.

And there shall come forth a rod out of the Stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

S this Prophet begins his Book with a severe Invective against the sins of his people, so he assures them that he saw the sword of divine vengeance brandished over their heads, and he often names the *Assyrian* for the hand which should strike with it. And indeed he lived to see his own Prophecy fulfilled. For after *Israel* and *Judah* had, by their mutual quarrels, weakned one another, the Kings of *Assyria* invaded them, and made a prey of them both. First, *Tiglath Pileser* spoiled the lands of *Zebulun* and *Nephthali*.

Nephtali. Then comes his Son *Salmanser*, and carries away the ten Tribes of *Israel* into Captivity. Afterwards his Son *Sennacherib* attempted the like conquest of *Judah*. *Isaiab* gives us the history of his invasion, Chap. xxxvi. where he tells us, this *Assyrian* took all the defended cities of *Judah*, i. e. all the frontier towns which were fortified for the defence of the country: and thought to have taken *Jerusalem*, as his Father did *Samaria*; though by the special hand of God he was prevented, as our Prophet had foretold. Let us hear what he says of him in the tenth Chapter, which will serve as a good introduction to the words of my Text.

HE begins at the fifth verse of that Chapter, with the character of this *Assyrian*, whom he calls, *the rod of God's anger* and *the staff of his indignation*, appointed for the chastisement of his hypocritical people, to spoil them, and to make a prey of them, and tread them down as the thistle in the streets. He likewise compares him to an ax, wherewith he will lop the boughs of his forest, and cut down the tall cedars of *Lebanon*. This is a metaphor whereby is signified the destruction of the people by the sword. And because *Lebanon* was a mountain of *Judea*, famous for Cedars, the first and best of Trees; the cutting down these Cedars is used here to denote the fall of the Kings and Princes of *Judah*. Nevertheless, says he, the house of *David* shall not be utterly eradicated, but a root and stock of that Family shall be left in the ground, out of which there shall spring forth a branch, which shall be richly adorned with the blessed fruits of the divine Spirit.

THIS Branch we Christians say was *Jesus Christ*, but the *Jews* who reject him, interpret it of *Hezekiah*. And true it is that *Hezekiah* was of the house of *David*, was contemporary with *Isaiab*,

Isaiah, and for his piety was delivered out of the hands of the *Affyrians*. But there are several reasons why the character of this Branch cannot be properly applied to him.

1st, **BECAUSE** this Branch was to shoot out from a root or stem which was hidden in the Earth, and seemed to be dried up, and to have lost all vigour and power of ever growing again. Which intimated thus much in plainer words, that the royal family should lose its lustre and station, and pass through a great deal of obscurity; that it should disappear, as I may say, and after a long interval appear again. But now this could not be said of *Hezekiah*, who came to the throne of *Judah* in a course of immediate uninterrupted succession, and whose Ancestors were illustrious from *David* till his own time.

2^{dly}, **THOUGH** *Hezekiah* was an excellent Prince, yet he had not that Spirit of a great Prophet which is here described in the words of my Text.

3^{dly}, **NEITHER** did he *smite the Earth with the rod of his mouth, nor slay the wicked with the breath of his lips*, as is here prophesied of this Branch of the house of *David*.

4^{thly}, **NOR** was *Hezekiah's* administration so perfect, as that righteousness could be said to be the girdle of it, nor his reign so pacifick, that the Wolf and the Leopard might be said to dwell with the Lamb and the Kid. For though his personal virtues were very laudable, yet his Ministers and People were generally bad, from first to last, as we learn from the history of the Kings, and from the frequent complaints which this Prophet makes of them.

5^{thly}, **NOR** could *Hezekiah* ever be said to do, what is prophesied of this Branch, *viz. to set up a standard for the gathering of the Gentiles, to reco-*

ver the outcasts of *Israel*, and to have filled the Earth with the knowledge of the Lord: for nothing of all this happened in his time.

BUT that *Jesus Christ* was such a Branch, as shot out from the house of *David*, after it had for many generations lain hid as a mean root, and nothing of it appeared visible above ground; that he had the Spirit of a great Prophet; that he was able to slay the wicked with the breath of his lips; that he erected such a kingdom as was held together with the bonds of righteousness, and propagated such a spirit as would mollifie the fiercest natures, and make them live peaceably together; that he set up an Ensign for the *Gentiles*, and for the dispersed of *Israel*, to gather all the children of God, from the four corners of the World, into one Church and holy Communion of Saints; and that he filled the Earth with the knowledge of the true God, is what the records of his pedigree and nativity, of his ministry and miracles, of the mission of his Evangelists and Apostles, do so fully testifie, as leave us no room to doubt but that this character here drawn by the Prophet, is intended for him.

IF it be demanded, to what purpose the Prophet mentions so remote a branch of the house of *David*, when he is speaking of the calamities impending over *Judah* from their *Affyrian* neighbours, in which *Abaz* and *Hezekiah* were immediately concerned; I answer, it was for the same reason as he prophesied before, Chap. vii. that a Virgin should conceive and bear a Son, and should call his name *Immanuel*; it was for the consolation of God's people, who looked for the redemption of *Israel*: to give them an assurance, that though they saw ten Tribes gone into Captivity, and must suffer farther devastations from the same Enemy, as well as from others who would rise up against *Judah*,

deb, yet they should still have a Saviour raised up for them out of the house of *David*, who should be the author of all the blessings which God had promised them.

BUT I shall confine my self to treat of those spiritual qualifications which were to distinguish this Branch of the house of *David*, here spoken of in my Text, where it is said, *that the Spirit of the Lord should rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

And, I. To the Spirit of the Lord in general, no man ever had so great a claim as this Son of *David*; who in his Conception, in his Baptism, in the whole work of his ministry, was filled with the gifts and graces of this Holy Spirit. *David* prophesied, *Psal. xlv.* that he should be anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows. *John the Baptist* testified that it was so, and that God gave him this Holy Spirit without measure or limitation. That he was not like former Prophets which had the powers of it only in some respects, and its impulse and motion only at certain times; but that he had it in a constant fullness, being always ready to do the works and speak the words of God. He himself at his first entrance on his Ministry, took that Text of *Isaiah lxi.* *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, &c.* and declared, after he had read it in the Synagogue of *Nazareth*, *This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And they all wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.* *Luke iv.*

NOR did this Spirit rest on him so, as to be confined to his own person: for he had the power to communicate it to whomsoever he pleased. This is the meaning of what he says to the woman of *Samaria*, *John iv.* *If thou knewest the gift of*

S E R M O N XXIV.

God, and hadst asked of me, I would have given thee that living water, which whosoever drinketh of, shall never thirst, but the water which I give shall be a well springing up to everlasting life. This is explained, John vii. 37 where he cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. This he spake of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive. Of this Spirit he imparted to his Apostles, when he sent them forth to preach the Gospel, to cast out Devils, to cleanse the Lepers, to heal the sick, to raise the dead. Another power he conferred upon them after his resurrection and a little before his ascension, when he breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. But the most illustrious manifestation of this Spirit, was at the Feast of Pentecost, ten days after Christ's ascension, when it came down from Heaven like a rushing mighty wind, and filled the house where the twelve Apostles were assembled, and rested upon each of them in the shape of fiery tongues, and enabled them to speak in as many languages as there were people of different nations then come up to Jerusalem to worship, which from the accounts in Acts ii. we may conclude to have been fifteen or sixteen several sorts.

THIS, in the opinion of an eminent writer, was the accomplishment not only of that Promise which our Lord had made to his Apostles in his last words upon Earth, that they should quickly be baptized with the Holy Ghost, but likewise of that other when he told them, that they should do greater miracles than he did, when he was ascended to his heavenly Father.

THE gift of Tongues, says he, was of that nature, that the like was never known in the World, neither before nor since the first ages of Christianity: nor can we well imagine any other sort of miracle that could probably affect men more, and strike them with greater admiration, and could have been a more sensible demonstration of a divine power and presence accompanying the Apostles, than to hear and see them all on a sudden, perfectly speak so many languages, which they had never learned before.

THUS I have shown in general how plentifully our Lord was endued with the Holy Spirit, and how he was able to communicate it to others.

WHEN I say Christ was endued with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, I mean this of his human Soul, which was capable of Improvements, according to that which is said in the Gospel, *that he increased in wisdom as well as in stature*. Of this rational Soul are all those Scriptures to be understood which speak of Christ's unction, illumination, and direction by the Holy Spirit. For otherwise, as he is the only begotten Son of God, and second person in the blessed Trinity, the Holy Ghost is properly said to proceed from him, and cannot be supposed to make any addition to his divine perfections.

LET us now come to the particular graces and virtues of the Holy Spirit, which adorned this Son of David here spoken of, according as we find them in the words here before us.

I. THE first is *wisdom*, which was so eminent in Christ, that he is styled *the wisdom of God*: it was the first thing which the World observed and admired in him. When he began to speak in publick, his neighbours and acquaintance were astonished at his doctrine, as far surpassing that of the

Scribes and Pharisees; and they cried one to another, Whence has this man, this Carpenter's Son, so much wisdom, having never been educated as the rest of our Doctors, in the Schools of Learning? Why, he had no need of such education, being taught of God, as it is here prophesied in my Text, and in other places; and as he acknowledges, Mat. xi. 25. where he says, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, those who had assumed that character, and were so esteemed on account of their Learning, and hast revealed them unto Babes, to those who are babes in the eyes of the higher part of the World, and in their own modest and humble opinion of themselves.

WHEN he had finished his ministry, he told his Disciples, *John xv.* that his infidel hearers had no excuse or cloak for their infidelity, because he had said and done every thing before them, which might demonstrate his mission to be from God. And in the next Chapter he tells them, that the Spirit which he was about to send, would convince the World of sin, because they believed not in him, *i. e.* would make them sensible of their contumacy and folly in rejecting that divine wisdom which he had taught. This is all agreeable to what he had said long before to certain of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, when they required him to prove himself the *Messiah* by shewing them a Miracle: he appeals to the demonstration of his wisdom, as the first and principal proof, *Mat. xii.* *The Queen of the South*, says he, *shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon: and behold a greater than Solomon is here; a more heavenly preacher, let the Gospel speak it, and much wiser in the conduct of life.* In which he excelled all that ever were born:

for

for he never spake unadvisedly with his lips; and was able to challenge his adversaries to the last, *which of you convinceth me of Sin?*

HE was wise and prudent in avoiding the snares which they threw out for him by their insidious questions; which he sometimes answered with silence, sometimes with another question, always in a manner which shewed that he was superior in wisdom to all his antagonists. He was wise in the working of his Miracles; for he would not do them to gratifie the vain curiosity of *Herod*, or of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; he would not lay any stress upon those which he did in private, and therefore he charged the patients to say nothing of them; he would not do them for gain, applause, revenge, but only to relieve the distressed, and serve the ends of mercy and goodness. Upon the whole, he fully answered that character of *St. Paul*, *Col. ii. 3.* that in him were hid, or laid up, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

II. OUR Prophet's next note of the Son of *David*, is, the Spirit of *understanding*; which was eminent in our Lord. For he knew the Scriptures so well, when he was but twelve years old, that he disputed with the Doctors about them in the Temple; and all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. When he began to teach in publick, he made such an exposition of the ten Commandments, as differed very much from the received sense, but was perfectly agreeable to the mind of God, and to the laws of holiness, truth and goodness. His answer to that question, *which is the first and great Commandment*, was applauded by the *Querist*. And in all his disputes with the *Jews* about marriage, the Sabbath, the Resurrection, and a future state, but especially about things relating to the *Messiah*, he plainly shews that they did not understand *Moses* and the Prophets.

324 SERMON XXIV.

phets. Even his own Disciples and constant hearers were so carried away with the prevailing errors of this last sort, that he had much pains to correct them, and was forced often to repeat and explain the same things to them: Which yet did not suffice; for after his Resurrection, we find him reproving the weakness of their faith, and slowness of their understanding, and explaining quite through *Moses* and the Prophets, those Scriptures which concerned himself.

Now for our Lord to be able to see the truth in such a heap of inveterate errors, to be the only man who could unlock and reveal those mysteries which had been hid from many Generations, is a clear argument that he was that Son of *David* promised in my Text, who should distinguish himself by a most penetrating and discerning Spirit.

III. THE third part of his character is, that he should be endued with the Spirit of *counsel*. Our Prophet before, Chap. ix. had put *Counsellor* into the style of the *Messiah*. Which suits very well with the evangelical precepts; in comparison of which, what counsels, I will not say of the Philosophers, but even of sacred writers are not lessened? Look into the Beatitudes, and see the extensive meaning of those short sentences. What infinite good would the first of them produce, if it were but duly regarded? *Blessed are the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*. This is an ax laid to the root of all manner of pride, and that is the root of all manner of enmity between God and men. If those who fill the chief seats of Christian nations, had but learned this first lesson of their profession, piety and reverence towards God would be every where enthroned. Nor could there be any want of condescension and good-will towards men, were superiors once persuaded

swaded that there is a Kingdom of Heaven to be obtained, and that these virtues are the sure and only way to obtain it. — Again, How much is there in that second Beatitude; *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*? If this mourning were understood of no more than an abstinence from needless and hurtful pleasures, even for a suitable practice of it would rid Christian nations of innumerable shows, entertainments, and representations, which intoxicate the Inhabitants of almost every city, and serve no other end so effectually, as to banish virtue, and recommend vice. — Lastly, (for I can insist upon no more particulars at present) if that third counsel, in favour of *meekness*, were at all regarded, we might turn our swords into plow-shares, and our spears into pruning-hooks; we should have no houses for the exercise of inhuman arts and sciences; brutal fury would be restrained to the woods and dens of savage beasts; nay, I know not whether these beasts would not put off their fierceness, were men once endued with a Spirit of meekness. I am sure the Sin of man brought in that rage and discord among the creatures, which they had not by creation. And they shall put it off, says our Prophet here, in the happy days of Christ's Kingdom, when *the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid, and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a child shall lead them*. I know Interpreters generally understand this of the agreement of men of the most different tempers and dispositions: but if men could once agree to observe the Laws of Christ, I am of opinion, that this of the Prophet would then be literally verified.

IN short, our Saviour is our wisest and best Counsellor, for the conduct both of publick and private life. If Governours and Governed would
but

316 SERMON XXIV.

but hearken to him, and consent to be his Disciples, not only in name, but in deed and in truth, we should certainly enjoy that happy state at present which was prophesied of, and which he intended for us.

THE IVth note of this Son of David is, that he is distinguished by the *Spirit of might*. Now our Lord manifested a greater power upon Earth, than any King or Prophet that ever appeared in the World. For as to his authoritative power, he did but speak the word, and the whole creation, visible and invisible, readily obey'd him. Spirits, Diseases, Winds, Seas were subject to him. He was able to smite the Earth, as he did the barren Fig-tree, with the rod of his mouth, and to slay the wicked, as well as to save the righteous, with the breath of his lips. He verified that saying of his, *that the World could not take his life against his will*; for he struck those men to the ground with a look, who first offered to apprehend him, and laid those guards in a trance as dead men, who watched his grave to hinder his Resurrection.

IF by *might*, we will understand Fortitude, who was ever found so courageous and constant as our blessed Lord? who spared not to preach his Doctrine openly, though most contrary to the beloved errors and vices of the times, and reprov'd the impiety of governing men to their faces, when they had more than once attempted to take away his life. Who when he could have commanded myriads of Angels to his assistance, yet submitted to be crucified as a malefactor, and *to be made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God*.

V. THE next part of the character of this Son of David is, his *Spirit of knowledge and discernment*: which was excellent indeed. For he knew the whole nature and will of God, and state of his

his heavenly Kingdom; he had the knowledge of distant things, before they were discovered to him by natural means. Thus he saw *Nathaniel* under the Fig-tree, and was certified of the death of *Lazarus*, before any one told him of it. He had a clear, infallible foresight of future events; witness his many predictions of what should happen to himself, to his Disciples, and to the whole state of the *Jews* after his leaving the World; all which exactly came to pass. He was a discerner of mens hearts, and knew the imaginations and working of their minds, by which he was enabled to discover *Judas*, before he was detected by his Fellow-Apostles, and to reprove with all freedom the hypocrisie of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*; according to what is here prophesied of him by *I-saiab*, that *he should not judge after the sight of his eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of his ears*, which is our surest way of forming our judgment; but by a faculty superior to ours, he knew what was in man, and needed not any assistance to make the discovery to him.

Lastly, THIS Son of *David* was to signalize himself by giving uncommon evidences of his fear of God; i. e. of his devotion for his service, and zeal for his glory. Which our blessed Lord testified upon all occasions. When his Parents lost him in *Jerusalem* at twelve years old, and found him at last in the Temple, and told him they had sought after him with sorrowful hearts; *How is it*, says he, *that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?* He professes that it was his meat and drink to do his heavenly Father's will; that he sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him. He teaches, exhorts, and commands his followers to fear and love God above all things; to do his will, and seek his Kingdom in the first place. He was frequent and fervent

fervent in his own prayers, adorations, and thanksgivings to him. Upon all occasions he vindicated the honour of his name and his worship. Particularly he cleansed the Temple with a remarkable zeal. And in his last extremities he gave up his life with the utmost resignation to the will of his heavenly Father, saying, *the Cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it? not mine, but thy will be done.*

And thus we have found our Lord Jesus to be the Branch prophesied of by *Isaiah*, which was to grow out of the stem of *Jesse*; and that the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding; the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

Now for a brief application of what has been said, and to shew how far we are all concerned in it. The Scripture abundantly declares, that we can have no benefit by the merits of Christ, except his Spirit rule in our hearts. *Except a man be regenerate, says he, and born again by the operation of this Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* We are framed, together with him, into one mystical body; of which he is the head, and we are the members; and we must be all united and knit together by the mediation of one Holy Spirit, and must be animated and quickned by those influences of it, which we derive from Christ our head. For it pleased the Father that in him all the fulness of it should dwell; of his fulness we must all partake, and be endued with spiritual graces, in some proportion to his grace. Every Christian must have, though not a miraculous, yet a supernatural measure of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and might, of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

OUR blessed Saviour professes in his prayer, *John xvii.* that he sanctified himself for our sakes, that we might be sanctified through his truth. For our sake he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, for our sake he was baptized, ordained to his ministry, and perfected with all graces and virtues by this Holy Spirit. And for our sake he sent him down from Heaven to give us new light, new knowledge, new hearts, thoughts, and desires: in short, to make us new creatures.

THIS then is the distinction which we may make between what is done by Christ, and what by the Holy Ghost, in order to man's salvation.

CHRIST took our nature upon him, and in it taught us the whole will of God, and set us a pattern of complete piety and virtue. He offered a Sacrifice for the sins of the whole World, he died, rose again, and ascended into Heaven in our nature.

BUT it is the Holy Spirit which sanctifies this nature, which regenerates our whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, which gives us a right, and enables us with faith and a good hope to call God our Father, and Christ our Lord; for, as St. Paul teaches, *no man can cry Abba Father, or faithfully say the Lord's prayer, no man can say that Jesus is his Lord, or claim a place in the Society and Communion of Christian people, except he be endued with this Spirit of adoption.* No man can see God, and be made partaker of his heavenly Kingdom, except he be qualified for it by this Holy Spirit.

THAT this Spirit can work such a supernatural change in the heart of man, as may properly denominate him a new creature, is evident from various examples. For Peter, of a simple fisherman, became the principal Apostle, and preacher of the Gospel; Paul, of a bloody persecutor, be-

came

came a faithful servant and minister of Jesus Christ; *Matthew* and *Zaccheus* were converted from the trade of carnal, covetous Publicans, to forsake all, and follow Christ, by the grace and influence of this Holy Spirit. *St. Cyprian* confesses that as soon as he was made partaker of the Grace of Christ by Baptism, he presently found light spring up in the darkness and ignorance of his understanding, he was clearly satisfied in those doubts which before were insuperable, and enabled cheerfully to do and suffer those things which had seemed to him impossible. And *Lactantius* makes this challenge to the *Pagan* idolaters of his time. ‘Give us your
‘man of a reviling, scurrilous, abusive tongue;
‘we will make him as meek and gentle as a lamb.
‘Give us your rapacious, insatiable miser; we
‘will make him a liberal, charitable dispenser to
‘the poor with his own hands. Give us your man
‘that is frightened at the thoughts of pain and
‘death; and you shall presently see him undaun-
‘ted at the menaces of fire, racks, or crosses.
‘Give us your lewd, adulterous, debauched li-
‘bertines; we will return them sober, chaste,
‘and temperate. Give us your cruel, blood-
‘thirsty ruffian, and you shall see his fury turn-
‘ed into clemency and tenderness. Lastly, give
‘us your careless, senseless, improvident wretch,
‘and we will return him a just, prudent, innocent
‘man.’

SUCH were the effects of the Holy Spirit in those first and purest times. If they are now want-
ing amongst us, we must not conclude that there is any decay in the Spirit it self, or in the graces and virtues of it. But it is, because we may re-
tain the profession of our religion without the power, using the word and sacraments of Christ, while at the same time we are no Christians.

THAT our hearts may not prove vain, nor our persons be appointed with hypocrites at the last, let us pray to him who has promised to give this Holy Spirit to them that ask it; and let us be careful not to grieve him with filthy, sensual, devilish sins; let us put away far from us lying, swearing, and cursing, debauched and filthy communications, blaspheming and reviling of God and men. Let us not abuse and prostitute the Gifts of God, our health and peace, our food and raiment, our leisure, wit, and senses to the service of those worst of Idols, rioting, impurity, and the corrupt pomps, pleasures and diversions of this World. But let us keep our selves as worthy members of Christ and temples of his Holy Spirit, cultivating, seeking, and rejoicing to find a good encrease of his blessed fruits in us, which may bear witness with our Spirits that we are the children of God, by whose testimony we may be sealed unto the day of redemption, through the merits of *Jesus Christ* our Lord; To whom &c.



Ver. III. SERMON



SERMON XXV.

On TRINITY Sunday.

~~EXHIBITION OF THE~~

GENESIS xviii. 1, 2.

And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day. And he lift up his eyes and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground.

IN the foregoing chapters we read how God, having taken *Abraham* into his special favour and protection, communicated his will and pleasure to him by words, and once or twice it is said that he appeared to him; tho' in what manner or shape he manifested himself, whether in that ray of divine Glory which the *Jews* call *Schechinah*, or in the figure of any rational creature, is not mentioned. But here in my Text God communicated with *Abraham* in the similitude of three men, who

who were travelling towards *Sodom* for the purposes mentioned afterwards, and called upon *Abraham* in their way thither. For so I explain the first verse of my Text by the second, and read them together thus: *The Lord appeared unto Abraham in this manner; one day, as he was sitting in his tent-door about noon, and looking out, he suddenly perceived three men coming up towards him.*

THAT this appearance was a type of the blessed Trinity of persons in the Godhead, is what the Fathers of our Church were certainly persuaded of, when they appointed this lesson to be read upon this day. And they had the authority of sundry antient writers who went before them in this interpretation. We are told of some *Chaldee Paraphrase*, (for I own I never saw it) which brings in *Abraham* saying, 'I beseech thee, O Lord God, if now I have found favour in thy sight, let not the glory of thy Majesty ascend up from thy servant, till I have fetched a morsel of bread.' If there be any absurdity in this paraphrase (as some who are against our interpretation of this appearance affirm) 'tis only in point of a very little time. They presume, and with some reason, that *Abraham* did not perceive the divine Presence in his guests at first sight; tho' he was apprehensive of it before they parted, as appears from the sequel of their conversation: which let us hear, and attend to throughout, and then we shall be the better enabled to judge of the quality and condition of the persons here spoken of.

It must be remembered, that when *Lot* parted from *Abraham*, by reason of the multitude of their flocks and herds, he went to dwell among a People, whose corruptions were so gross, that they were just ripe for destruction. They had been accused and tryed at God's Tribunal, and sentenced to the judgment which shortly after befell them.

For the execution of which he took the method of this appearance, accommodating himself to the senses and notions of mankind in this affair. *I will go down, says he, and see whether these men have done altogether according to the cry of their sins which is come up before me: and if not, I will know.* Accordingly he came down in the similitude of way-faring men, who being very unhospitably treated by these profligate citizens, justified to all the World the severity of God's judgments upon them.

AND he called upon *Abraham*, in his way to *Sodom*, for three reasons. 1st, To shew the difference between hospitality and inhumanity. 2^{dly}, To renew the promise of his blessing to *Abraham*. 3^{dly}, To acquaint him with his visitation of *Sodom*.

1st, GOD called upon *Abraham*, to shew us the difference between the hospitality of a man truly fearing God, and the inhumanity of those who had cast off all his fear. *Abraham*, who was now in the hundredth year of his age, and even for those times an elderly man, yet had a vigorous spirit for all the duties of a pious and social life. He was so far from being afraid of seeing a friend about dinner-time, or making his age an excuse for retiring to his couch or his chair, that he set himself at his Tent-door at noon, which in summer time, the season here to be understood, was very hot indeed. And when he saw the Travellers here spoken of, he did not stay till they came up to him, but as if he had been afraid of losing them, he ran to meet them, and with the kindest gestures and words invited them to take some refreshment with him. He made low obeisance to them, and thus addressed himself to the foremost of them: *My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray thee, be fetched, and wash*

wash your feet, and rest your selves under the tree; and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort your hearts, and afterwards proceed upon your journey. No man living, who had made the greatest advantages of a publick Inn, could have given a kinder invitation to guests of the highest rank to have purchased of him what the good Patriarch resolved to give freely. But *Abraham*, as he was the most eminent servant of God, so he was the most courteous and best-natured man of his time, both in word and deed. His deeds upon this occasion exceeded his offers. For having prevailed with his guests to sit down, he joyned with his wife and servant in furnishing out a speedy and plentiful entertainment; and when it was prepared, he brought it with his own hands into the arbour, and set it before his guests, and stood at their backs to wait on them while they were eating it.

WHAT shall we say of this Entertainment? shall we call it a fine image of ancient hospitality? I am afraid, that even in the best times, there were not many examples equal to this. I am sure the good Patriarch condemned a rich man of his own blood for his want of this sort of beneficence. *Sam*, says he, *remember, that thou in thy lifetime receivest good things, and Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* *Abraham*, says a great man of our own, was the father of a large posterity, and yet he is dead without issue; his lineage has failed in this respect. For who is there now, who shows the same hospitable care of relieving distressed persons? You say, you have it not for them, when God knows, a great part of what you have, is for them, if you would faithfully execute God's Commission, and dispense the Talents he has entrusted you with, to the purposes for which he has made you his stewards.

HOWEVER, he who says this, limits hospitality to those who are of the household of God, and, in appearance at least, worthy of his care and providence; and he puts in a special caveat against all sturdy incorrigible vagrants; against all that are given to rioting and drunkenness, to scurrilous and lewd language, to execrations, oaths, and blasphemies; always remembering the rule of our Lord, *that it is not meet to take the childrens bread, and cast it unto dogs.*

BUT with respect to mens worldly circumstances, the same divine Master exhorts us *to give and lend, hoping for nothing again*; and so did *Abraham*; for he knew not at first, that his guests were any more than meer way-faring men, whose way happened to lie by his door, and might probably know nothing of him, nor ever see him again after that day. Yet considering that they were in a lonesome place, fatigued with travel and the heat of the weather, and that it was now the usual time of the day for refreshment, he invites them in as heartily, and treats them as respectfully and sumptuously, as if they had been his nearest relations, or dearest friends.

How different is this from that spirit of Perdition which reigns and always has reigned in the World? whose sons are of that sort which *St. Paul* characterizes, *2 Tim. iii.* ‘Inordinate self-lovers, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to Parents, unthankful, unholy, void of natural affection, not to be trusted, slanderers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, treacherous, perverse, opinionative, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.’ Whoever travels thro’ such generations of men, ought to keep a Jubilee at the end of his journey, if he escapes the malignity of so many evil spirits. For one hospitable *Abraham*, he shall find many churlish

churlish *Nobels*, many envious *Sauls*, many calumniating *Dons*, who all descended from *Abraham*, and yet had not one feature nor good quality of the Parent in them.

ABRAHAM was a noble Image of the most High, whose property is to be ever merciful and gracious. He was so true and faithful in word and deed, so full of humanity, courtesie, and benevolence in all his conversation, that he was the favourite of God and men. God was in love with him for his excellent Spirit; he did, as I may say, dwell with him, dined with him, entered into a familiarity and friendship with him, and was always covenanting and engaging to aggrandize his family. Which brings me to the

2d REASON of his calling upon him at this time; it was to renew his Promise of giving him an heir. For as these three men sat at dinner, and were much pleased with their entertainment, they asked *Abraham*, *Where is Sarah thy wife?* and upon his answering, *She is in the Tent*, the Querist proceeded to say, *I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son: i. e.* Reckoning from this day so many months as are necessary for the conceiving and perfecting of a child, I will accomplish my Promise which I have formerly made, and your wife shall be brought to bed of a son.' Now this is the first discovery whereby we conclude that God was in these men. For he that renews this promise, speaks in the Person of God, and with the same authority as before ch. xvii. 16. This must strike *Abraham*, when he heard the sound of these words in his ears, and the speaker undertaking by his own power to fulfill them; this must convince him that he had God for his guest. And he presently tells us, that he was convinced of it. For when his wife, who stood in

the Tent-door, behind the Arbour where they sat at dinner, overheard these words, and laughed at them, as impossible to be made good, knowing her self to be past child-bearing; the Lord, says *Abraham*, (and he now calls him in the original by the incommunicable name of God) asked, why *Sarah* laughed: 'Does she think any thing can be too hard for the Lord? I say, I will return at the time appointed for bringing forth a live child; and she shall have a son.'

This Promise deserved the solemnity of such a divine appearance and serious asseveration; for upon the birth of this child depended that of the *Messiah*, in whom all nations of the earth should be blessed. And so *Abraham* understood it. For to this appearance may be referred that saying of our Lord, *John* viii. 56. *Thou father Abraham greatly desired to see my day, i. e. my coming into the World ascertained, and he saw it, and was glad.*

Adly, A third reason of God's calling upon *Abraham* at this time, was to acquaint him with his intended visitation of *Sodom*. And this was a farther proof that God was in this appearance. After the entertainment was ended, the men rose up, and went towards *Sodom*, and *Abraham*, like a courteous entertainer, went out with them to bring them onward of their way. When it was proper for him to take his leave, two of them went forward, while the third made a stand to have some farther discourse with *Abraham* about this Visitation. He is called by the incommunicable name of God, as such he speaks, and as such *Abraham* treats him, and replies to him. The Lord, says the Text, said, Shall I hide from *Abraham* the thing which I am going to do; since I have decreed to multiply him into a great nation, and to make him a blessing to all people? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they

they shall hear the day of the Lord, to do justice and judgment. Whence we see plainly that it is God that speaks, and that he enters into this free and friendly communication with *Abraham*, to give him assurance of the favour he had for him, to afford him an opportunity of shewing his compassionate and tender nature in interceding for sinners, and to give him credit with his own Posterity and all the World, who should hear how fully God had revealed himself to him, and what great account he made of him.

I. God's acquainting *Abraham* with his intended Visitation of *Sodom*, was an assurance of the favour which he had for him. For this and the neighbouring Cities which suffered with it, were nigh the place of *Abraham's* abode; and therefore the thunders and lightnings which were sent from Heaven to destroy them, might have astonished *Abraham*, and put him in doubt of his own safety, had not God been graciously pleased to apprise him before-hand of what he was about to do.

But it was natural for him to be concerned for his nephew *Lot*, who was at this time an inhabitant of *Sodom*; and I am perswaded that God certified him before of his pleasure to deliver him; for which reason we hear nothing of him in *Abraham's* intercession for that place. We find in fact, that he was delivered before the storm fell, out of regard to *Abraham* as well as to himself: for God remembered *Abraham*, says the sacred Text, Gen. xix. 29. and sent *Lot* out of the midst of the overthrow: at the same time he gave a demonstration to all the World, that he is able to rescue his servants from destruction, while he pours out his judgments upon the ungodly.

II. God apprized *Abraham* of his intended Visitation of *Sodom*, that he might give him an opportunity

portunity to shew his compassionate and tender nature in interceding for that place. As he had been highly pleased with his humanity to strangers, so he is equally delighted with his commiseration of offenders. *Abraham* was the father, according to the flesh, of that great Mediator and Advocate, who made propitiation for the sins of the whole World, of whom he was in some measure a type and resemblance, in exercising this office upon this occasion. Six times did he move the supreme Judge to spare the wicked for a certain number of righteous men, and the Judge heard him out with patience, and graciously condescended to every motion. Partly to teach us, of how great moment it is for the preservation of every City and Society, that there should be good men among them, like wheat among weeds, which when they fail, it is a sure sign that the rest are nigh unto burning. And partly to stir up our zeal, and encourage us to make prayers, supplications, and intercessions for all men, that, if it were possible, none might perish, but all might come to repentance; and to assure us, that God is pleased with the intercessors, as he was with *Abraham*, however he may see fit to deal with those, for whom they intercede.

III. God intended, by this communication with *Abraham*, to do him honour, and make him respected by his own Posterity and all the World. This has gained him the peculiar and distinguishing character, that he was the friend of God, admitted of his Privy-Council, to reason and debate with his Maker concerning his dispensations towards mankind. 'I will, says God, apprise *Abraham* of the judgment I am going to execute, 'that he may speak his mind of it, and inform 'the generations to come of my condescension to 'hear every plea that can be offered for the
' greatest

‘greatest sinners, and my willingness to spare them upon any terms, which even in human estimation have any face of good reason.’

ALL men who read this, and observe how God abated four parts in five of the price which was first offered to redeem these sinners, must needs say, that *Abraham* had a wonderful interest in his favour, and by the testimony of the divine Majesty was a very holy and heavenly man, very fit to be the father of many nations, and the founder of God’s Church upon earth.

AND thus we have seen how God appeared unto *Abraham* under the similitude of man. For tho’ the shape was human, yet the speech was divine, in the person, and with the authority of God: as such *Abraham* acknowledges and treats the last that talked with him; addressing his plea to him, as to the Judge of all the earth.

As to the mode of speech here used, it may be objected, that there is something like it in the Prophets, who were real men, and yet personated God in many things which they said. But then they give us notice of it by saying, *Thus saith the Lord*, hereby intimating, that they delivered their message in God’s own words, and were no more than his Messengers. Whereas, in the case before us, the Speaker is expressly called God, and speaks every thing as from himself, and without referring to any one that sent him.

THIS I think is a just account of this sacred history: and the doctrine I would infer from it, is that which is intended by our Church, *the mystery of the blessed Trinity*. A mystery, I say, or something hidden under sensible things which veil it; for the divine nature, directly and in it self, cannot be made visible to mortal eyes. We cannot now see God as he is, but only thro’ the glass of types and shadows. Neither have we any comparison

parison wherewith we may compare him; and therefore we are forbid to make any similitude of him. And if any man will ask us, upon the case before us, whether the three persons in the divine nature are like three men, we must answer, *Not at all*. But yet none can deny that three human persons are proper to denote and signifie to us, that there are three in the divine nature. It is most reasonable to think, that if God would assume any sensible figure, wherein to converse with us, it would be that of our own species; which as it is most natural and fit for our conversation, so it is the most worthy of any that we are acquainted with. We confess that by the condition of our nature, we are inferior to those heavenly Spirits called Angels; yet whenever we form any idea of them, we can imagine them in no shape better than our own; and in such shape they have appeared; whenever God has sent them on any message to mankind, as holy Scripture and other histories abundantly testifie. And if these creatures can put on our resemblance, cannot the Creator himself do the same, whenever he sees reason for it?

It may be said, this is too great a lessening of God; and if we say this in contemplation of our infinite distance from him, it favours of modesty; but if we say, 'tis impossible to be done, or that he has not actually condescended to do it, we deny our own religion; for that teaches us, that the second person in the blessed Trinity hath taken our nature, not in appearance, but reality; not for a time, but for all eternity. And if now in reality, why not then in appearance? If now for ever, why not then for a time, as occasion required? Most of our christian Fathers were perswaded, that he often appeared so to the Patriarchs and holy men of old, particularly where the incommunicable name of God, or divine honours are ascribed

ascribed to him, tho' otherwise he be introduced by no higher title than that of Angel or Man. For which, among many other places, they alledge this Gen. xviii. and that he was the Speaker here, and held the discourse with *Abraham*.

I will not pass over that which *Aben Ezra* objects against us Christians, in his comment on this place. They argue from hence, says he, that God has three persons, and yet that the Unity of his nature is not multiplied: But they do not observe (what presently follows in the next chapter) that two Angels came to *Sodom*. I answer, we do observe it, and allow farther that our own Apostle *St. Paul* calls them Angels, saying, *Heb. xiii. be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for some (we suppose Abraham and Lot) have entertained Angels unwares*. We likewise grant that our English Expositors have thought that these three men were Angels. But then, as one of them says, The word *Angel* must not be too precisely interpreted. For sometimes it signifies less than those blessed Spirits of God, as the Bishops of the seven Churches of *Asia*, are called Angels: and sometimes more, as Christ is styled the Angel of the great Council, *Isa. ix.* and the Angel of the Covenant, *Mal. iii.* We know that Angel signifies a Messenger, one that is sent, or acts like one sent about any business. And let these here be either Men or Angels (they are said to be both, and both heavenly and earthly Beings are called by those names) we know that both are the names of creatures, and yet under either of them may the divine nature be veiled. We say that the mystery of three persons in the God-head was signified by these three men who appeared to *Abraham*: and we think this appears from the whole conversation which passed between them and *Abraham*.

How-

HOWEVER, we do not say, that this is a sufficient argument to convert *Jews* and Infidels to the confession of this Faith. We have abundance more clear and evident grounds for our own and their conviction. We see the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity interwoven in the whole body of the old and new Testament. But yet between those who make this chapter a demonstrative and concluding argument to prove the blessed Trinity, and those who oppose it, as if it had no shadow of this doctrine, our Church hath taken a middle way, when by appointing this lesson for this day, whereon we celebrate the praises of this mystery, it declares, 'That to us who have been baptized and catechized in the faith of it, it refreshes, it cherishes, it awakens in us that former knowledge we had of the blessed Trinity, to hear that our one God manifested himself to *Abraham* in three persons.'

THAT *Abraham*, who was admitted to a most intimate communion with God, was endued with the knowledge of this mystery, and saved by the faith of it, is what, I think, we are taught to conclude from *Heb. xi.* But it was not for his sake only that this was done which is here written; it was for our instruction, that early impressions of this mystery might be made upon our minds: that this, among other arguments, might help to confirm us in the antiquity and divine authority of this Faith into which we are baptized.

It is neither our desire nor our duty to say more or less of the Deity, than what we find written in his own holy Word. But whatever we find revealed of him there, we are bound to believe and confess, without indulging our own notions, or hearkening to the objections of our own carnal reason. According to this Revelation we must suit our belief and worship of God.

AND since the doctrine of the blessed Trinity in Unity, is, as I observed before, interwoven in the whole body of sacred writ, it is for that reason taught in our Sermons, confessed in our Creeds, and made the object of worship in all our devotions.

IF therefore we are not resolved to renounce our Christianity, nor to give up our hopes of that heavenly Kingdom which Christ has opened to none but those who believe this doctrine, let us heartily beseech Almighty God, that he would keep us steadfast in this Faith, and evermore preserve us from all heresies and errors which are contrary to it, that with the blessed company of all faithful People we may praise and magnifie one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, World without end. *Amen.*



SERMON



I therefore we are not resolved to renounce
our Christianity, nor to give up our hopes of that
heavenly Kingdom which is before us. We are
as those who have been brought out of Egypt
heavily beset. Almighty God, that he would
keep us from all perils and evils which are
contrary to it, that with the blessed company of
God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, World
without end.

SERMON XXVI.

On the First Sunday after TRINITY.

JOSHUA xxiii. 2.

*Take good heed therefore unto your selves,
that ye love the Lord your God.*

AN excellent charge of a pious Governour and tender Father of his people. *Joshua* had now established *Israel* in the possession of *Canaan*, and found it proper to confirm them in their religion by two farewell orations, contained in this and the following Chapter. We heard before, Chap. xiii. 1. that he was old and stricken in years, and we are told in the last Chapter that at the time of his death he was an hundred and ten, exactly the age of his ancestor *Joseph*, from whom he was descended by *Ephraim*. And there seems to have been a special hand of Providence in this Family, that as *Joseph* brought his Father and Brethren out of *Canaan*, so *Joshua* should bring their posterity into it again.

At his coming out of Egypt he must be forty five years old, if that be true which *Josephus* writes; with good reason I think, that he survived *Moses* twenty five years: for these two numbers added to the forty spent in the Wilderness, make an hundred and ten.

THAT he was then a man of good experience in the affairs both of war and peace, appears from his being imployed about the person of *Moses*; and, as we say, *his right hand*; appointed by him to be captain of the army against the *Amalekites*, over whom he obtained the victory; admitted to the second place of approach to the divine Majesty at mount *Sinai*, *Exod. xxiv. 13.* sent among others to discover the condition of the land of *Canaan*, which he reported with such fidelity, that God blessed him for it, and gave him an immediate assurance that he should enter into it.

IN the next place we find him destin'd by the divine oracle to succeed *Moses* in the government of the people, and to lead them into the promised land: For *Moses* being warned of God to expect his dissolution quickly after he had seen *Canaan* from mount *Pisgah*, presently addresses for a successor, saying, *Let the Lord, the God of the Spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, who may go out and in before them, and lead them out, and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd. And the Lord answered, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, i. e. give him a share of the government in thy lifetime, that all the congregation may be obedient to him, and go out and come in at his word; and Moses did so.* *Numb. xxvii.*

338 SERMON XXVI. On the

AFTERWARDS God gave a special direction by *Moses*, *Numb. xxxiv. 17.* that *Joshua*, with other principal men of the Tribes, should divide the land of *Canaan* by Lots and shares among the children of *Israel*; this is much spoken of in *Deuteronomy*, particularly *xxxi.* where *Moses* taking his leave of the people, called out to *Joshua*, and said to him in the sight of all *Israel*, *Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people into the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.*

How this was fulfilled, we presently read after the death of *Moses*, where it is said, that *Joshua* was full of the spirit of wisdom, *Moses* having laid his hands upon him, an ancient ceremony for such a purpose: and God presently appeared to him, and encouraged him to pass over *Jordan*; the people at the same time recognizing him for their captain, and plighting their faith and allegiance to him, saying, *All that thou commandest us, we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the Lord thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words, in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong, and of a good courage.* *Joshua i.*

We have seen how *Joshua* was called by the suffrage of God and men, to preside over *Israel* in the room of *Moses*; and we find that his subsequent actions, recorded in this Book which bears his name, prove him to be worthily advanced and ordained to this great charge. The power of his Faith, the rewards of his piety and reverence of God's word, shone forth in a long course of prosperity, which was attended with many supernatural demonstrations of the divine favour towards him.

him. For the waters of *Jordan* divided, and opened a passage for his army, as the red sea had done for *Moses*. The walls of *Jericho* fell down at the sound of his trumpets. The clouds poured down great stones upon the armies of the *Canaanites*, when they were fighting against him; and the Sun stood still in the midst of Heaven to give him time to be avenged of them.

Let us suppose, as we must according to the former calculation, that *Joshua* was fourscore and five years old when he entered upon his government: that the remaining twenty five years which he lived, should be the most laborious and active part of his life; that he should be able in this period to conquer so many different Kings and people, as we read of, to reduce so many rocks, castles and towns as they had fortified when they heard of the first design of this invasion, and to divide the country among the Tribes of his own people, to every ones content, is to me a demonstration that he was endued with more than human vigour both of body and mind, derived from the special promise and blessing of God, and from the prayers and hands of his predecessor *Moses*.

Now the subject of this Chapter whence my Text is taken, is the first of those farewell orations, which *Joshua* spoke to his people a little before he was taken out of this life. When God had prospered his Government so, that he saw *Israel* in a condition to live well and make good their inheritance of the promised land, about fourteen years from the conquest of the country, and seven after the division of it, as learned men suppose, he called together the subordinate magistrates of the people, and the principal men of their Tribes and Families, whether to *Timnath-Serah* his own city, or *Shiloh* where the Ark of God was placed, is uncertain.

346 SERMON XXVI. *On the*

WHEN they were assembled, he stood up, and told them, that apprehending himself to be near the end of his life, he was obliged by his place and station to say something which might make good impressions upon them, as his predecessor *Moses* had done before him.

AND first, he puts them in mind of the great things which God had wrought for them under his administration: for the truth of which he appeals to their own senses. 'Ye have seen, says he, how our arms have prevailed against the old Inhabitants of this country; a great part of whom we have rooted out, and though some remain still unconquered, it is no more than what we were to expect; it is according to the word of the Lord which foretold us, that these nations should not be cast out all at once, but by degrees, lest the beasts of the field should take possession of their vacant places before we could inhabit them. However we have taken such hold of their country, that they cannot dispossess us, nor put a stop to our progress, if we are not wanting in our duty to God. Therefore I have taken upon me to divide among you, not only the conquered but unconquered Lands, from *Jordan* in the East, to the Mediterranean in the West.'

HENCE he proceeds to exhort them in the next place to a faithful observance of the Law of God. 'Ye see and know in all your hearts and souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you, all are come to pass, and not one thing hath failed thereof: you are entred into houses and cities which ye built not, and into vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not. One of you hath chased a thousand; and no man hath been able to stand before you, because

‘ cause the Lord your God hath fought for you,
 ‘ as he promised you. And so he will continue
 ‘ to do, if you cleave stedfastly unto him, and take
 ‘ care to love him with all your heart and with
 ‘ all your soul: and come not among these nations
 ‘ that remain, nor swear by their Gods, nor serve
 ‘ them. Then the Lord will expel them from be-
 ‘ fore you, and drive them out of your sight, and
 ‘ ye shall possess their land, as he hath promised
 ‘ you. Be ye therefore very firm and constant in
 ‘ keeping and doing all that is written in the
 ‘ Book of the Law of *Moses*, that ye turn not
 ‘ aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.’

3dly, He forewarns them of the unfortunate
 change which their revolt from God to idolatry
 would make in their affairs. ‘ If, says he, you
 ‘ apostatize from your religion, and make marri-
 ‘ ages with these nations which remain among
 ‘ you, and run into their ways and manners;
 ‘ Know for a certainty, that the Lord your God
 ‘ will drive out no more of them from before
 ‘ you; but they shall be as snares and traps unto
 ‘ you, and scourges in your sides and thorns in
 ‘ your eyes, until ye perish from off this good
 ‘ land which the Lord your God hath given you.
 ‘ As he makes good his promises to you, upon
 ‘ the condition of your obedience; so will he
 ‘ bring upon you all the evil things which he hath
 ‘ threatned, in case of your rebellion, according
 ‘ to what *Moses* foretold at large, xxvi *Levit.*
 ‘ and xxviii *Deut.*’ Upon the last of which places
 a learned Commentator has demonstrated, that not
 one thing hath failed of all the threatnings there
 mentioned to be inflicted upon the revolting *Jews*,
 but all have been fulfilled to a tittle. For God’s
 faithfulness is no less visible in fulfilling his threat-
 nings than his promises.

342 SERMON XXVI. On the

That is the substance of *Joshua's* first discourse to the representatives of *Israel*, when he apprehended himself to be near his end, and was concerned for their well-doing after his decease.

But in a little time (it is presumed in a year or less) after this, finding he had sufficient strength of body, and thinking he could still bind his people firmer to their obedience of God's law, he summoned them again to meet him at *Shechem*, the place where they had renewed their Covenant with God, when they first entered into *Canaan*; and there he pressed them to be very steadfast and unmoveable in the service of God, by briefly reciting what he had done for them and their fathers, and how he had distinguished them from all other people by his singular mercies; by calling *Abraham* out of idolatrous *Chaldea*, and making him the father of his Church and People; by giving him *Isaac* in a miraculous manner; by multiplying the house of *Jacob* in *Egypt*, and in the fulness of time rescuing his posterity from thence, in spite of all the Gods and Princes and armies of the *Egyptians*: by attending them in the Wilderness with the signal of his presence, fighting for them against *Amalek*, *Sihon* and *Og*, *Balak* and *Balaam*, i. e. against the powers of Earth and Hell: and finally by bringing them over *Jordan*, and making all their Enemies to fall and fly before them, with little help of their own sword or bow.

ALL this he recounts, to convince them that God who had so highly honoured them by choosing them for his peculiar people, and so endeared them to himself by constant preservations and successes, had the sole right and claim to their service and obedience. And from hence he strongly infers the charge which he had to lay upon them. *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity*

First Sunday after TRINITY. 343

city and truth, and put away the Gods which your fathers served in Chaldaea and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. ' But, says he, after all the advantages of your religion which I have laid before you, if you are not satisfied about it, but think you can do better, I can say no more, only this, that whatever you shall think fit to do, I and my Family will continue as we are, in the service of our God.'

THIS struck the hearers with horror at the thoughts of apostatizing. ' No, said they; God forbid that we should forsake our Lord to serve other Gods. We are sensible that he hath done for us all the great and glorious things which you have recounted; we our selves are eye-witnesses of many of them. Therefore we will serve none other but our Almighty Deliverer, who hath manifested himself to be the only true God.'

JOSHUA, who was endued with the Spirit of prophecy, and foresaw things to come, could not dissemble the suspicions which he had of his peoples inconstancy. ' I am afraid, says he, that you have not a heart in you to serve God in an acceptable manner: for he is a jealous God, who will not endure a rival. Polytheism is a sin which he will not forgive: you will be apt to run into it: and this will provoke him to alter the course of his dispensations towards you, and instead of your protector to become your scourge, and your destroyer instead of your deliverer.'

BUT when after all, the people persisted in their resolution, and grew warmer in their protestations that they would serve the Lord; ' Well, said Joshua, here are enough of you to bear witness, that from this day you renounce all manner of idolatry, and adhere to the one true God.

344 SERMON XXVI. *On the*

‘ Now therefore put away the strange Gods that
 ‘ are among you.’ (this shews that even then they
 kept Idols privately in their closets) ‘ and set your
 ‘ hearts fully and wholly upon the Lord God of *Is-*
 ‘ *rael.*’ Then he bound them in the bond of a solemn
 oath to stand to what they had promised; and
 enacted that this their profession of faith should
 be called the statute or ordinance of *Shechem*: And
 he writ the discourse which had passed between
 him and the people, in the Book of the divine
 Law, which he kept constantly at hand, accord-
 ing to the charge which God gave him in the first
 Chapter, when he entred upon the Government.
 And lastly, he took a great stone, or pillar of
 stone, and set it up under an oak near the sanctu-
 ary of the Lord, and probably caused an Inscrip-
 tion of what had past to be engraved on it, and
 said, *behold this stone shall be a witness, for it hath*
heard all the words of the Lord: i. e. ‘ the Covenant
 ‘ between God and you hath been ratified in this
 ‘ place where this stone stands, which will serve
 ‘ for a memorial of it to all posterity, and accuse
 ‘ you if you break it, as much as if it had heard,
 ‘ and could speak.’ And thus, when he had made
 an end of these things, he let the people depart,
 every man to his own habitation.

ALL this I have represented from the two last
 Chapters of *Joshua*, as the most suitable enlarge-
 ment on the words of my Text, shewing what a
 pious conclusion he made of a useful life, and how
 much he had it at heart, that after his decease his
 people should be stedfast in their religion, and un-
 moveable in their adherence to the divine Law.

SUCH religious and zealous Exhortations of
 Governors to their people are highly commenda-
 ble upon several accounts.

1st, THEY are very pleasing to God, and a
 proper means to derive his blessing upon the Go-
 vernment.

vernment. God has appointed Magistrates to be his vicegerents in this World, and to make his image to shine not only in the exercise of justice and judgment, but likewise in their frequent, open acknowledgment of his supreme Majesty, by whom and for whom they are ordained to govern. He knows very well, that if the head wants eyes to see and ears to hear, the members will never be rightly animated and directed to glorifie his name, to exalt his Kingdom, to do his will as it ought to be done upon Earth. Good Governors are good Angels; of a middle nature between God and men; and the more of God there is in them, the greater benefactors they are to the World. A *Moses*, a *Joshua*, what a safeguard were they to an often-offending and ill-deserving *Israel*! So *Hezekiah* and *Josiah* reigned in bad times, when corruptions were grown inveterate, and they could but paint, as I may say, the face of a reformation: they could not enthrone religion in the hearts of men; for when they were removed, the corruptions returned. Yet because they did the best they could for the glory of God and the advancement of his service, he was so favourable to them, as in their days and for their sakes to spare *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, that they were not given up as a prey to their enemies. There is joy in the presence of God and his holy Angels, when the righteous are in authority, and the Judges of the Earth praise and magnifie the King of Heaven.

2dly, THE pious Exhortations of Governors are very apt to affect their people's hearts with a sense of the divine Majesty, and a love and reverence of his holy name. They are apt to make more moving and lasting impressions upon their minds, than they would have done if spoke by a lower rank of men. We see how fond people are to get but a sight of their Head and Chief, and how attentive

fective to all his looks, motions, and gestures; but to hear him speak like a *Moses* or a *Joshua*, would be universally and justly esteemed as a voice from Heaven. I doubt not but it was one great reason why God dignified King *Solomon* with the character of the wisest of men, that his excellent writings and sayings might have the greater weight. For though excellent in themselves, yet they are certainly the more regarded for the sake of their Author. I mention this to show how much it is in the power of great and governing men to influence their inferiors by good discourses. And I am glad to find, among the highest and wisest of ancient times, such a harmony in their commendations of true religion. *Moses* and *Joshua*, *David* and *Solomon*, and what other great one is there among the sacred writers, who does not inculcate, above all other things, such admonitions as these in my Text, That we should be sure to love, honour and obey God, and serve him in the first place; that to do this, is the best ground of pleasure and comfort, the only way to obtain the felicities and avert the calamities of mind, body and estate: that we shall find God our best friend, or most dreadful enemy, because he is able to do whatever he pleases, to fulfil his promises of all that is good, and execute his threatnings of the most grievous judgments. This is what the bravest Kings and Princes have taught mankind; and they call it the sum and substance of all their wisdom. Which is such a glorious commendation of the benefit of true religion to a people, that nothing can exceed it. Whatever has been said of the advantages of human policy, knowledge, or learning, is nothing at all in comparison of it.

3dly, We learn from hence how the pious Exhortations of Governors should be enforced by their own examples, and by the examples of all that

that are about them, of their family, or retinue, or men so dependent upon them, that it is in their power to remove them if they will not fear God, and make room for such as will. When *Joshua* had offered his people the strongest reasons to perswade them to serve God in sincerity and truth, with all their heart and soul, and to cast away the idols of their cloister and retirement, and they had promised him they would do so; 'Yet, says he, you may do otherwise after all, and I cannot help it; but I can undertake for my self and my own Family, that we will be sincere and upright in the worship of God.' This alone is a just proof and demonstration that we love God indeed, when we not only keep his Laws our selves, but do what in us lies to oblige others to serve him. On the other hand, though the master and mistress of a Family seem to be well affected to religion, yet if they do not train up their children and servants in it; though their own speech and carriage be grave and serious, yet if they have prophane, petulant tongues about them; and though there be no imputation upon their own modesty and virtue, yet if any of their Family is publickly known to be an unclean lewd liver; such master and mistress do not at all come up to *Joshua's* love of God; for if they did, then they would, like him, exert their zeal and diligence, so, that none of their household should dishonour God with an evil conversation. But after proper admonitions, if they found them incorrigible, they would no longer endure them within their walls, but cast them out as odious to God, and dangerous to the rest of their Family.

AND a proportionable blame is to be laid upon all Magistrates and Ministers, who do not endeavour to suppress prophaneness and immorality within the compass of their Government. For though they

they cannot know those that are without, so well as those that are within their own Family; yet there are flagrant offenders which they must needs hear of, and who will be brought before them: which if they do not endeavour to restrain by the authority which they have for that purpose, they neglect the honour of God, and suffer the powers of darkness to insult his Majesty, offend his servants, and corrupt his children.

THIS leads us, in the *Fourth* and last place, to observe the happiness of that people whose Magistrates and Ministers are men fearing God and hating iniquity, who regard the souls committed to their charge as the redeemed of Christ, and heirs of eternal salvation: who are vigilant to prevent, and strenuous to punish sedition, rebellion and treason committed against the common Father and Lord of us all. Such Governors are the good Angels of God, sent down from above to gather his children into the ark of his church, and transport them into the Kingdom of Holiness and Virtue. They are continually restoring that image of God in man, which makes him look down with pleasure upon cities and societies, and delight to dwell among them, and pour out all manner of blessings upon them.

WHAT a pleasing sight is it, incomparably beyond all other glories of this World, to see *Moses* and *Joshua* revived in such Governors, men of truly heroick fortitude, humanity, and goodness; who cannot bear the thoughts, that any of their flock should, through their neglect or misconduct, be reprobates and sons of perdition: who willingly sacrifice their own wealth and ease, pomps and pleasures to the salvation of their poor inferior brethren; who assure them by their thorough and exemplary practice of religion, that they are the servants of God, and believe his word,
and

and recommend the duties of it to all the World, as the only means to obtain the blessings both of the present life, and of that which is to come.

Such Magistrates are the life and light of the World; they maintain a right understanding, as I may say, a sweet harmony and communion between God and men; and turning many to righteousness by their pious counsels and examples, they will shine like the Sun in the Kingdom of their heavenly Father. To them all the ancient Kings and Worthies of God who glorified him upon Earth, open their arms, and invite them to come and take their places with them near the Throne of the King of Kings, our Christian *Joshua* (for it is the same name in the *Hebrew*) who subdues our spiritual enemies under our feet, and leads us into a heavenly *Canaan*, where he hath purchased for us an Inheritance of everlasting joy and satisfaction and rest from all our travels; and where he liveth and reigneth with the Father, &c.



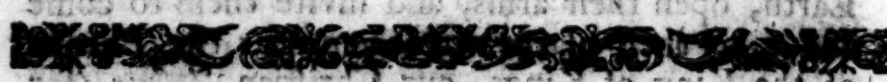
SERMON

WHAT



SERMON XXVII.

On the Second Sunday after TRINITY.



JUDGES V. 1, 2.

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam, on that day, saying, Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

IN the foregoing chapter we have an account of a great battel fought between *Israel* and the *Canaanites*: in this we have *Israel's* thanksgiving to God for the victory.

THE occasion of the war was a long and grievous oppression which *Israel* suffered under a tyrannical King of *Canaan*; which when they had endured twenty years, they took arms, and, by the help of God, rescued themselves from the yoke of their oppressors.

IF it be asked, why the hand of Idolaters prevailed so long over the People of God, the reason is given ch. iv. 1, 2. *The Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, because they did evil in his sight.*

WHAT

Second Sunday after TRINITY. 351

WHAT that evil was, *Deborah* tells us, ch. v. 8. *they chose new gods; then was war in the gates.* The latter was made, by the divine decree, a necessary consequence of the former.

WE lately heard what a solemn charge *Joshua* laid upon his People, in two farewell discourses which he made to them a little before his death, to keep clear of this sin of Idolatry: forewarning them how it would happen, that if they forsook their Lord and served strange Gods, he would no more drive out the nations before them; but they should be scourges in their sides, and thorns in their eyes.

AND his exhortation had this good effect, that the People adhered to their religion so long as that generation lasted, who had seen the wonderful works of God both in the Wilderness, and at their first entrance into *Canaan*; but when they were worn out and dead, their successors revolted to idolatry: *Judges* ii. 11. The reason of their apostasie is said to be this, that *they knew not the Lord, nor the works which he had done for Israel*: i. e. they had not seen them with their own eyes; for otherwise they might easily have known them by the teaching of their Parents. But I am afraid the Parents were faulty in this respect, and gave themselves up so entirely to their worldly affairs in their new Inheritance, that they could not find time to teach their children what God had done for them, so carefully and constantly as by his Law they were enjoyned to do. For 'tis incredible to think this new generation could be wholly ignorant of the miraculous blessings which God had vouchsafed to their fathers; but they had not been taught them with such diligence as might inspire them with a just esteem and love of their supreme Benefactor.

352 SERMON XXVII. *On the*

HENCE it came to pass, that they often forsook their God, and served *Baal* and *Ashtaroth*. Whereupon God's anger burned against them, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers who spoiled them, and they were greatly distressed on every side. Nevertheless God raised them up Judges who delivered them out of the hands of those that spoiled them. For he was much moved with their groaning by reason of their oppression.

FROM the death of *Joshua* to the time of *Deborah*, which is computed to be about one hundred and fifty eight years, we read of three such Judges, and she makes the fourth. These Judges were inspired with an extraordinary spirit of courage and wisdom. For they did the part both of Prophets and Soldiers. As Prophets they took a deal of pains with their People, to reclaim them from the idolatries, alliances, and wicked customs of the Heathen: and as Soldiers they always performed some heroick exploit, whereby they broke the power of their oppressors, and shook off the yoke of bondage in which they had been held.

BOTH these offices were well executed by *Deborah*, tho' she was but a woman: For being endued with a divine Spirit, as is here affirmed, and likewise a Princess in *Israel*, as the *Rabbins* suppose, the People resorted to her to learn the Will of God, and took her judgment for their direction in all difficult cases. She animated them to assert their liberty, she chose them a captain, and ordered the levying of soldiers, and directed them as to the time and place of giving battel to their enemies, and accompanied them in person to encourage them in the engagement, which, according to her predictions, ended in a triumphant victory and compleat deliverance. Of which she has left an everlasting memorial in this song of praise

Second Sunday after TRINITY? 153

praise here before us: which abounds with thankful acknowledgments of the mighty hand of God, aiding and assisting *Israel* in the day of battel, and makes honourable mention both of the Tribes and particular persons who signalized their zeal and valour on this occasion; and leaves a just mark upon others, who thro' cowardise, infidelity, or worldly policy forbore to appear and lend a helping hand to this work. And lastly, it contains an admonition to the adversaries and oppressors to fear the God of *Israel*, who is so mighty to save and deliver his People from all the powers of the sons of men.

1st, THE Prophetess begins with the praises of the most High, and excites her victorious *Israel* to magnifie their God. Then in transports of joy she invites all the Kings and Princes of the earth to listen to her song, to take notice that it is a Woman which triumphs over the nine hundred chariots and innumerable soldiers of the King of *Canaan*; and that not by the help of shield or spear, of which there was not seen one among the thousands of *Israel*, but by the interest which she had in Heaven; whose stars in their courses fought against *Sifera*; and discharged their Artillery of thunder and lightening, storms and tempests, upon the heads of his army.

WHEN she speaks of the want of shield and spear in *Israel*, I do not think she means that they were wholly unarmed; for no doubt but they had ox-goads, and other instruments which they used in the business of their houses and fields; but for weapons of war, both offensive and defensive, their oppressors had taken them all away, as we read the *Philistines* did afterwards, 1 *Sam.* xiii. So that they held them in subjection, without apprehending any danger from them; and it is very unlikely that the *Israelites* would have taken any mea-

354 SERMON XXVII. On the

fires to recover their liberty, if they had not been moved to attempt it by a special direction from God, with assurance that he would prosper their endeavours, and crown them with success, by sending them immediate help from Heaven, as in fact he did; for *the stars in their courses fought against Sifera*: Which we may understand in the plain literal sense, without having recourse to any figure of Rhetorick for justifying the expression. It was no uncommon thing for God to fight from the clouds in defence of his People. *Moses* and *Josbau* had been thus assisted before, as *Gideon*, *Samuel*, *Jehoshaphat*, and others were afterwards. Neither was this kind of assistance confined to *Israel*; we read of the like in other histories. For *Plutarch* writes how *Timoleon* Prince of *Corinth*, a most worthy assertor of the liberties of mankind against the Tyrants of his time, was employed in *Sicily* to deliver the cities of that island from various oppressors: And how in the course of his wars, an army of seventy thousand *Carthaginians* came against him in the open field, when he had but five thousand foot and one thousand horse of *Corinthians* to oppose them. But *Timoleon* trusting to the favour of Providence, and the goodness of his cause, attacked the *Carthaginians* in their passage over the river *Crimisus*. Whereupon Heaven declared for him in loud peals of thunder, which descending from the mountains came to the place of battel, and discharged such a tempest of wind, rain, hail, and lightening in the face of the *Carthaginian* Army, that they could neither hear the commands of their officers, nor see how to assault their enemies. Besides, the dirt and slipperiness of the field was a great disadvantage to them; for being encumbered with breast-plates of iron and helmets of brass, and other harness, when they were once down, it was impossible for them, un-

Second Sunday after TRINITY. 335

der such a load, to dis-engage themselves from the mire, and rise again with their weapons in their hands. Likewise the river *Crimisus* swelling, partly with the excessive rain, and partly with the multitude of *Carthaginians* passing over it, and stopping its current, overflowed its banks, and made it uncertain for them where to set foot: So that the light-armed *Corinthians* had nothing else to do but destroy them at their ease, and make a prey of them. The circumstances of this victory so much resemble that of *Deborah* and *Barak*, that they well deserve to be mentioned together.

To this may be added a more modern instance of miraculous victory; reported by *Eusebius* a christian writer, book v. ch. 5. of his Ecclesiastical History, which is this: That when *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, Emperor of *Rome* in the second Century, had wars in *Germany*, his soldiers were very faint for want of water, and at the same time obliged to stand in array against their enemies. In this extremity such of his soldiers as were Christians, fell upon their knees, and earnestly besought God to give them rain. Whereupon so much rain fell as satisfied every one's thirst, accompanied with such thunder and lightening as destroyed many of their enemies, and put the rest to flight. This prodigy, says our historian, is related both by Heathens and Christians. The Heathen indeed, who allowed the miracle, yet denied that it was obtained by the prayers of Christians. But he refers to a letter of the Emperor's, wherein he attested, that his army being in *Germany*, and ready to perish for want of water, was preserved by the Christians prayers.

Thus hath God visibly assisted his People in the day of battel.

2dly, AFTER due praises rendered to God, *Deborah* thankfully commemorates both the Tribes

356 SERMON XXVII. On the

and particular persons who signalized their zeal and valour upon this occasion. To *Barak* she assigns the first place in this triumph, as being commander in chief of the *Israelites* army. *Arise, and lead thy captivity captive, thou that hast dominion over the nobles among the people.* Of the people who willingly offered themselves, at his invitation, to serve under the banner of the Lord of Hosts, were the children of *Ephraim* and *Benjamin*: out of *Manasseh* came captains with their companies; and tho' the *Zebulunites* were men of letters, chiefly bred to writing, yet their zeal carried them from their books to bear a part in this war. *Zebulun* and *Nephthali* hazarded their lives, and exposed themselves to imminent danger in the forefront of the battel; and the Princes of *Issachar* shewed themselves with *Deborah*, as soon as they heard the alarm of war, and brought many of their men into the field.

BUT the person who has the largest share in this song of praise, is *Jael* the wife of *Heber* the *Kenite*; whose husband was allied to *Israel* both by religion and affinity, as being descended from *Jethro*, *Moses's* father-in-law. But there were no such bonds of relation between *Heber's* family, and the *Canaanites*: 'tis only said that between *Jabin* King of *Canaan* and the house of *Heber* there was peace; that is, they were not in a state of hostility, but kept up a good understanding with one another, probably because *Heber* was not of the house of *Israel*, but only allied to it by a marriage which might not be known to *Jabin*, and therefore he had no quarrel with this sojourner. This is all I believe which is meant by the peace between *Jabin* and *Heber*. For I cannot think that there was any formal league between them, ratified with sacrifice, or bath, or any solemn promise. Indeed I see no reason to believe, that *Israel*, whom *Jabin* oppressed,

oppressed, were entangled in any such obligation. The honour of God would have been so much concerned in such an obligation, that he would not have suffered, much less have incited and assisted his People to break faith even with their worst oppressors. He would not suffer them to violate such an oath with the *Gibeonites*, tho' made rashly, ignorantly, and contrary to the letter of his own Law; and he severely punished *Zedekiah* and his People for breaking their league made with the King of *Babylon*, tho' he was their great oppressor.

I conclude therefore, that God who foresaw the revolts of his People, and their oppressions consequent thereupon, having decreed to re-assert their liberty, and raise them again above their oppressors, was always pleased to order things so wisely and graciously, as to preserve his People from the snare of such obligations, that they might be free to take arms whenever he commanded them, and to strike in with the directions of his Prophets, and the advantages given them by his Providence for their deliverance. So that neither *Othniel* was engaged to the King of *Mesopotamia*, nor *Ehud* to the King of *Moab*, nor *Deborah* and *Barak* to the King of *Canaan*, by any obligations of religion or conscience, but were held in servitude by the meer force and arms of those oppressors, being always free in mind, and always restored to the freedom of their outward government with honour and a good conscience.

WITH the like good conscience did *Isaiah*, I suppose, execute the will of God upon *Sifera*. The peace which was between her house and *Jabin*, was not founded in any solemn contract, but only in a general good understanding, which left her hands at liberty to do the Will of God, according as his Spirit should move and direct her.

318 SERMON XXVII. On the

From that in destroying *Sisera*, she acted by the immediate impulse and direction of the divine Spirit, cannot be doubted. It does not appear, when she invited him into her Tent, that she had any such thought in her mind, but rather meant as he did, and intended to conceal him. But when she saw him fast asleep on the floor, an advantage which she did not expect, she was presently convinced that the God, whose servant she was, had delivered him into her hand, and plainly called upon her to destroy him, and so prevent any farther mischief which he might do to *Israel*, which might be very great, if he were suffered to escape. And perhaps this incident renewed the memory of some former intimation which God had given her (for such great things are often supernaturally intimated) that it should one day be in her power to deliver *Israel* from their greatest enemy. It is certain that this was foreseen by *Deborah*, for she tells *Barak*, that he should not have the honour of killing *Sisera*, for he should fall by the hand of a woman. And when *Jaël* had killed him, she went out and met *Barak*, and both knew him and his business, that he was in pursuit of *Sisera*, who lay dead in her tent. So that it is plain, this whole business was transacted by the special ordinance and direction of God. *Jaël* glorified him in it, acknowledging him hereby to be King of Kings, and that tho' he sometimes gave up *Israel* to be corrected by their enemies, yet that those enemies were doomed to destruction, and were like rods, to be cast into the fire, when the correction had attained its due effect. To burn such rods she esteemed a laudable work; and she was not mistaken in her opinion, if *Deborah* was a true Prophetess, who pronounces her blessed for this exploit, blessed above all the women in *Israel*.

Second Sunday after TRINITY. 359

3dly, As *Deborah* makes honourable mention of such as signalized their zeal and valour upon this occasion; so she justly animadverts upon others who thro' cowardise, infidelity, or worldly policy, forbore to appear, and put a helping hand to this work.

It is observable that she has three ways of reproving those who did not appear in the field, and joyn their brethren upon this occasion.

I. SHE says nothing of *Judah, Simeon, or Gad*; so that I fear they deserved no commendation; otherwise they would have had it with the best of their brethren. Not finding them here, I conclude they were absent; but for what reason is utterly unknown. Whatever it was, it is certainly some reproach to them to be passed over without any mention or place in the foregoing list.

II. *REUBEN and Gilead, Dan and Asher* are here recorded with dishonour, as preferring their private interest before the publick welfare. The first of these were the eldest Tribe, and should properly have been foremost in this glorious enterprise; but to stay at home as they did, and excuse themselves from being concerned in it, was a great disheartning to their brethren, and might have frustrated the whole design. For the divisions of *Reuben* there were great searchings of heart: great reasonings amongst those who were rising against the *Canaanites*, why their brother *Reuben* sat still, and would not help them. And perhaps great debates amongst the heads of the *Reubenites* themselves, one part pleading for a compliance with their brethren, who were hazarding their lives for their religion and liberty; but others, who were the more numerous and prevailing side, wished them to consider that their soldiers were undisciplined, unarmed, and their leader but a woman;

360 SERMON XXVII. *On the*

that they should run a desperate danger in rising against a King, mighty in himself, and much strengthened by the alliance of several other Kings; that if they should miscarry in this attempt against him, they should be ruined for ever: and therefore it was best for them to keep the peace, and wait the farther progress of this business, before they engaged and became partners in it.

SUCH cautious measures as these seem to have kept *Reuben* among the sheep-folds: and the like prevailed with *Dan* and *Asher* to remain in their ships. Their Inheritance lay upon the coast of the *Mediterranean*, which led them to merchandise; upon which account they abounded in shipping, and were the less concerned for the state of the inland Country, and might think of securing themselves and their effects by putting off to sea, in case of any pressing danger from the *Canaanites*.

GILEAD abode beyond *Jordan*. Under the name of *Gileadites* are comprehended the *Gadites*, who living at such a distance, made that their excuse for not coming to assist their brethren in their present distress.

BUT the greatest reproach of all is cast upon *Meroz*, a city near to the place where the battel was fought; which being of considerable strength, and able to have done good service, chose rather to stand out in a cold neutrality, than to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Which was a very bad example, and a stumbling-block to others, that a city so near, and so powerful, should shew no regard to the cause and command of God, no zeal for his honour and worship, no sympathy in the afflictions and perils of their brethren. Hence it is that while other Tribes are only mentioned with resentment for their failure of duty, *Meroz* is cursed with a bitter curse. And that
this

this might not seem to proceed from inconsiderate passion, it is backed with the authority of Heaven, and pronounced by that Angel who ministered between God and *Deborah* in this affair. And it seems to be a notable effect of this curse, that the name of this city is blotted out, and not the least remains of it left upon earth.

Now these Divisions show us the necessity of preserving ourselves in the favour of God, since we can have so little dependance on men, though they are of the same country, of the same kindred, of the same religion, and have the same common share of prosperity or adversity with ourselves. None of these considerations could move one half of *Israel* to assist the other, even when they were summoned from Heaven to unite, and recover their liberty.

INDEED if ten thousand men, unprovided of proper arms, had appeared in the field against nine hundred chariots, and ten times as many well-disciplined soldiers on the side of their oppressors, without having concerted such a stratagem, as might have turned the fortune of the battel on their side with little fighting, they had deserved the neglect due to hair-brained people, rushing upon their own destruction. But in this case they had such a stratagem, *i. e.* an assurance that God would fight for them, and surprize their enemies with his interposition, which would do more service than all the arms and arts of war.

THIS they were assured of by *Deborah*, whom they owned for a Prophetess, and had long resorted to her as the oracle of God, and saw her now at the head of this business, summoning all *Israel* in the name of God to come into it. In this she did no more than former Prophets and Deliverers had done, according to the usual course of their Government in such cases. And therefore to obey

362 SERMON XXVII. *On the*

obey her summons, was, upon their own principles of government, to disobey the voice of God. Which since one half of the Tribes ventured to do, 'tis very plain, as I just now observed, what little dependance we can have upon men for our deliverance.

If we could stedfastly persevere and continue faithful in our duty to God, we should always be surrounded with the arms of his mercy, and enjoy the benefit of his protection; and then we should have no occasion for such deliverances, because we could not fall (I speak of our publick, not our private state) we could not fall into any great calamity. But such a good state of religion is scarce to be found any where for any long time together. For we cannot receive prosperity, the reward of it, but that proves a canker to our religion, and so destroys the root whereon our blessings grow. The fortune of *Israel*, as it is set forth in this book of *Judges*, is the picture of our own, so far I mean, as to shew us how it varies, and the reason of its variation.

WHEN outward comforts fail us, we are more careful to get those of the mind, which result from communion with God, from the practice of virtue, and a good conscience. When we labour under grievous straits and hardships, we are more mindful of our prayers, to try if we can obtain relief from God. Scarcity of provisions keeps under those carnal affections which grow inordinate thro' fulness, and break thro' the Laws of God and man. And when we hold our life in suspense by reason of any contagious sickness, or war in our gates, it is then most natural for us to look upward, and wish for a place in that happy Kingdom where life is secure, and perfectly free from any danger or disturbance. Now those circumstances which dispose us to be thus serious and

spiritually

Second Sunday after TRINITY. 361

Spiritually minded, we call afflictions, we are uneasy in them, we endeavour to remove them. And it pleases God sometimes to gratify our desires, and work out our deliverance; and we thank him for it. But how soon does such a change of condition commonly change our manners for the worse? So that we have seen the same man very pious and virtuous when poor, very atheistical and profligate when rich. Cities and nations have run the same changes. The old *Romans* observe, that their *Rome* was never so pious, chaste and modest, as when *Hannibal* with his *Carthaginians* hovered about their gates: on the contrary, when they had conquered the World, their wickedness kept pace with their prosperity, and their great Emperors were the greatest slaves to all impiety and debauchery.

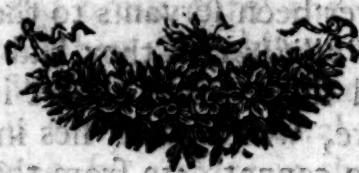
W H A T then? shall we not pray to God to deliver us from the fore-mentioned afflictions? shall we not render him thanks and praise for such deliverance? We are certainly bound to do both; otherwise we should rob him of the glory of rewarding and punishing mankind. But then let us be sure to beseech him to deliver us from ourselves, from our own rebellious wills and passions, which are the root and ground of all our calamities, which rob us of our peace and plenty, which disarm us of our shield and spear, which turn the edge of our swords, and deliver us over to reproach, to be the prey and sport of our enemies. *Israel* had never been servants to the *Moabites*, *Canaanites*, and *Philistines*, if they had not first served their lusts and idols. And where is the city, nation, or empire, which now lies in ruins, whose destruction we cannot date from the overflowings of atheism and immorality amongst them?

I confess I could almost venture, upon this occasion, to change that saying of the Psalmist, that

that God sets up one, and puts down another. For tho' it be most true with respect to his hand which does this, yet he never does it but in consequence of mens demerits; their manners are the meritorious cause of his dispensations. I speak of the publick. The publick state of any people always corresponds with their general practice of religion and virtue.

WE never hear of *Israel's* falling into slavery, but we are first told of their falling from the Laws of their God. To the obedience of which they found it necessary to return, and confess their sins, and put away their lusts and idols, before they could get rid of their yoke, and obtain their freedom.

IF then we heartily join in the conclusion of this song, and say, *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord*, let us take heed that we be not of the number of those enemies, and so render our selves obnoxious to our own imprecation. Such enemies were *Israel*, as oft as they violated the Law which God gave them by *Moses*: let us humbly beseech him to prevent us with his grace, that we Christians may not make our selves his enemies, and become liable to his judgments, by transgressing the precepts of our heavenly Legislator, Jesus Christ, his Son our Lord. To whom with &c.





SERMON XXVIII.

On the Third Sunday after TRINITY.



I SAMUEL iii. 12, 13.

In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken against his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.



OF the four Sons of *Aaron*, we read that two died before him, and two survived him. *Eleazar* the elder of the survivors succeeded by his birthright in the High-priest's office, and his children after him, for some Generations. 'Till at last, for a reason unknown to us, the posterity of *Ithamar*, *Aaron's* youngest Son, became High-priests, beginning with this *Eli*, whose history is here before us, who was both Chief-priest and Judge of *Israel*. This was a common thing in an-

cient

366 SERMON XXVIII. On the

cient times, for the same person to be chief both in sacred and civil matters.

How *Eli* governed *Israel*, we are not told, but may guess by the condition of his own Family, which was very loose and disorderly. His two Sons, grown men, and in the Priest's office, were impious towards God, and injurious towards their Brethren. For not content to receive such parts of the Sacrifice as the divine Law had allotted them, they took what they liked best, sodden or raw, and many times before it was offered upon the Altar, and that in such a rude and prophane way, as made people abhor the offerings of the Lord, and debased the majesty of religion, and made it contemptible in their eyes.

LIKEWISE they abused the women who came to the Tabernacle for devotion, ravishing some, as *Josephus* affirms, and corrupting others by presents, and that so commonly and grossly, that all *Israel* rung with the infamous reports, and there were not wanting some who carried complaints of them to their aged Father, and gave him full information of their wicked behaviour.

ELI was moved with these complaints, and thereupon took his opportunity to give his Sons reproof and counsel. 'Why do you mis-behave your selves so strangely? said he. I hear of your evil-doings by all the people. You who should be their reformers, are their tempters and seducers to iniquity. When the people commit any trespass, we who are Priests and Judges intercede for them with God, and do right to an injured neighbour: but when we our selves break those Laws whereof we are guardians, who shall intercede for us?'

SUCH was the reprimand which *Eli* gave his Sons; but they slighted it, and still continued in their evil courses; which though their Father saw, yet

Third Sunday after TRINITY. 367

yet he proceeded no farther to restrain them than by such kind of reproof. This lenity brought down the judgments of God upon him, his children and people. God was not at all satisfied with this way of correcting vice, but charges it home upon *Eli*, that he suffered his Sons to make themselves vile without restraining them.

WE see then that these words went for nothing in God's account. *Eli* shewed his displeasure at his Sons manners, and if this had reformed them, it had been very well. But when he found it ineffectual, should he have stopt here? No; he should have laid aside the Parent, and have exerted the authority of the Chief-Priest and the Judge. He should have punished these offenders with all the pains which the Laws impowered and obliged him to inflict in such cases: which I believe would have been the pains of death. But if he had not proceeded so far, he should have removed them from their office, and put them under such confinement, that they might not go abroad to act their wickedness among the people. If he had dealt thus with them, he had effectually restrained them.

BECAUSE he did not do this, God was highly offended with him, and denounced his judgments against his house by two special Messengers. First by a Prophet whose name is not told, but his message is recorded in the foregoing Chapter. It begins with an exhortation concerning God's distinguishing favours to *Eli's* Family, in preferring them before all the Tribes of *Israel* to the Priesthood, an office of the highest dignity, and endowed with a most easie and plentiful maintenance. 'Wherefore then, says God, do ye kick
' at my Sacrifice, and not content with your own
' portion, have sacrilegiously incroached upon the
' fat of the offerings, which belongs to me? and
' thou honourest thy sons above me, by studying
' to

368 S. E R M O N XXVIII. On the

‘to please them rather than me; not punishing them
‘for their sins, nor turning them out of the Priest’s
‘office, which they have so shamefully prophaned,
‘as it is your place and duty to do.’ This is ex-
actly what *Josephus* says, that *Eli* loved his chil-
dren more than the service of God, and thereby
drew down his curse upon them. ‘Expect there-
‘fore, says God, to find me an avenger of such
‘contempts and affronts; For those that honour
‘me, I will honour; and they that despise me,
‘shall be lightly esteemed.’

BEHOLD, I will cut off thy arm, i. e. thy
two Sons, *Hophni* and *Phineas*, whose tragical
death shall be an earnest to thee, that I will ful-
fil all the rest of my threatnings: and I will cut
off the arm of thy Father’s house, as it happened af-
terwards at *Nob*, where *Saul*, at the instigation of
Doeg, massacred eighty five Priests in one day:
neither shall there be an old man of thy progeny, for
they shall all die in the flower of their age.

AND thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation;
the *Philistines*, Chap. 4. who took the ark of God,
and with it the life of *Eli* and several of his chil-
dren: and thy posterity shall see an adversary in my
Temple, a High-priest of another Family set above
them. For I will raise me up a faithful High-priest,
Zadok, of the line of *Eleazar*, who shall do all
my pleasure. He shall walk before mine anointed,
Solomon, and preside in the Temple which he shall
build, and his children after him for ever. And
every one that is left of thy Family, shall come and
crouch to him for a piece of silver, and for a morsel of
bread; and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of
the Priest’s offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

THIS is the substance of the first Message
which God sent to *Eli*, which I have been the
more particular in reciting, because it is not so
much repeated afterwards as confirmed by *Samuel*.

And

And this second denunciation serves to inform us, that neither had *Eli*, upon the first notice of God's wrath, changed his conduct towards his children, neither had God, in the time between these Messages, altered any thing of his first sentence, but here he ratifies and confirms it by *Samuel* in as strong terms as language can afford. *I have sworn*, says he, *that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.*

BESIDES, there were several Circumstances in *Samuel's* person, which added to his Message the greatest credit and authority.

1st, *SAMUEL*, at this time, was but a child of twelve years old, as *Josephus*, with great probability, reckons. Which age exempts him from all suspicion of inventing this Message, or any part of it. We may depend upon his innocent simplicity for it, that he reported it in the same words as God had dictated to him.

2^{dly}, *SAMUEL* regarded *Eli* with a truer affection than his own Sons: he was attendant upon his person day and night, was very observant of his commands, and careful not to give him any offence: For which reason he was loath to let *Eli* know what God had revealed to him, and would not speak of it, till he was adjured in the most solemn manner to declare it.

3^{dly}, THIS was the first time that the word of the Lord came to *Samuel*. He was far from knowing it at first hearing. Thrice he was perswaded that *Eli* had called him; for they lodged not far from each other in the court of the Tabernacle. *Eli* satisfied him that it was the word of the Lord: and God took this way of revealing himself to *Samuel*, both to establish his character and reputation as a Prophet, and likewise to awaken *Eli* to expect the judgments, which he had denounced against his Family by a former Pro-

170 SERMON XXVIII. *On the*

phet, and which he quickly began to execute, as we read in the following Chapter.

From there we presently have an account of two unfortunate Battels which *Israel* fought with their mortal enemies and oppressors the *Philistines*: who seem to have been the aggressors, taking advantage of the low estate which the *Hebrews* were now in, to make reprisals for the damages done them under the late Government of *Sampson*. So they took the field and came up to *Aphék*, a frontier town in the Tribe of *Judab*: where they halted a while; but meeting with no opposition, they advanced as far as the place afterwards named *Eben-ezer*, and came to an engagement with the army of *Israel*, and slew four thousand of them.

UPON this defeat, the *Israelites* who escaped to their Camp, entered into consultation about their farther proceedings. *Wherefore*, said they, *bath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?* This question *Samuel*, though a child, could have answered, if they had asked him. But indeed it is strange that any of them should make a question of it, when they all must know, upon a little serious reflection on their behaviour towards God, how much both Priests and People had offended him, by their forementioned corruptions, and by their idolatries, which though not mentioned here, yet are pointed at by the *Psalmist*, *Psal.* lxxviii. and were afterwards discovered, and in good measure reformed by *Samuel*, Chap. vii. upon which their arms prevailed; I should rather say, God fought for them from Heaven against these *Philistines*. But to hope for his assistance while they continued in these sins, and that notwithstanding his late warnings by his Prophets, that they must expect speedily to feel the effects of his anger, was nothing else but a proof of their unaccountable infatuation.

HOWEVER,

HOWEVER, in their Council of war, they proposed this expedient; 'Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of *Shiloh*, that when it comes amongst us, it may save us out of the hands of our Enemies.' But they considered not, says their Historian *Josephus*, that God who had pronounced the sentence of their calamity against them, was greater than the Ark, which deserved not to be revered but for his sake. Well, says he, the Ark was brought into their Camp, and the Sons of *Eli* attended it, whom their Father charged with the care of it, telling them that if they should happen to lose it, they must never see his face again.

WHEN the Camp of *Israel* saw the Ark, they shouted so loud, that the Earth rang again. Which the *Philistines* understanding, were as much dismayed. For they considered that this had never been done in their Wars before, and apprehended some wonderful effect from it, and cried out, 'We are undone; who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty Gods, who smote *Egypt* with such dreadful plagues?' But their officers animated them to fight courageously, and think of nothing but victory or death. 'For, said they, if these *Hebrews* should become your masters, as you have been theirs, they will be terribly revenged on you, for those hardships which they have suffered under you. So that you had better die bravely, than spare your selves to become their slaves.'

THE *Philistines* hearkned to the voice of their Commanders, and charged the *Israelites* with such desperate fury, that they quickly turned their backs and fled to their Tents. There fell of them about thirty thousand men, among whom were the two Sons of the High-priest: at the same time the Ark was taken, and carried away by the Enemy into their own country.

As soon as the news of this defeat was brought to *Shiloh*, and it was certainly known that the Ark of God was taken (for a young *Benjamite* who escaped out of the battel, brought this report with his cloaths rent, and earth upon his head) all the city was filled with lamentations. *Eli* the High-priest was sitting near the Gate, in great concern to know how things went. When he heard the rumor, that he might know the certain truth, he sent for the young man, who informed him of every thing that had happened. The fate of his Sons and the army he heard with great moderation, because he had been forewarned of it; and those things which are foreseen, are less affecting when they come to pass. But when he understood that the Ark was taken and in the Enemies hands, this calamity so amazed him, that he fell backward from off his seat, and being very aged and unweildy, the fall dislocated the *Vertebrae* of his neck, and put an end to his life, in the ninety eighth year of his age, after he had judged *Israel* forty years.

THE same day died the wife of *Phineas*, soon after she had heard of the death of her husband: for she was with child, and near her time, and upon the news of the destruction of *Israel*, she fell into labour, and brought forth a Son, whom she named *Ichabod*, which signifies, *what is become of our Glory?* meaning, that it was all darkened and turned into dishonour, because the Ark of God was taken by the Infidels, and because her father-in-law and husband were come to such untimely ends.

SUCH were God's dispensations towards the house of *Eli*: and the reason of them is easily understood from the words of my Text. *I have told him, says he, that I will judge his house for ever; for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his*

Sons

Third Sunday after TRINITY. 373

Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.

Now since we have seen the sharpness of *ELI's* sufferings, let us consider a little more particularly the aggravations of his sin, which brought them upon him.

I. *ELI* was the High-priest of a holy God and a pure religion; which laid him under a special obligation to see that all good order and decorum was observed in the sacred administrations. For next under God, his house was to be the fountain of Holiness to all the people. Intolerable therefore was the behaviour of his Sons, who so horribly corrupted this fountain by their luxury and lewdness. The sin of these young men was very great, since the law of their Priesthood neither tied them up to a starving maintenance, nor abstinence from marriage. But when they abandoned themselves to Enormities, who but their Father should have restrained them? They were his children, under his roof, subject to his authority and disposal. They were out of the reach of all others but himself. He alone was answerable for their manners to God and to the people. He could not be ignorant of that necessary qualification which *St. Paul* puts into the character of a High-priest; for even nature and common sense suggest it; that *he should rule his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?*

II. *ELI* was the Judge of *Israel*, the great Oracle and Guardian of their Laws, the dispenser of justice and judgment; which made it the greater reproach to him, that two such criminals as his own Sons should be endured in his own house. For with what face could he condemn and punish those sins in others, which were known to be

practised in his own family, under his own inspection, and that with no more animadversion than that of a mild reproof? No doubt but his lenity towards his own children caused him to execute the Laws very negligently in more remote cases; and consequently his people must grow bold in those vices for which they had such great examples, and multitudes of them must become ripe for the sword which destroyed his Sons. It is a common case, and can never be otherwise, that those who have the administration of the Laws of holiness and virtue, cannot heartily enforce them upon others, when they are notoriously broken in their own families. And this is the reason why vice prevails so much in the World; not so much for want of hands armed with power to suppress it, but because their power is enervated by the practice of that very thing which they should restrain.

III. It was a great aggravation of *Eli's* sin, that he knew of his Son's Excesses; he heard of them, as we say, with both ears, from God and men. For though his eyes were dim, that he could not see clearly, yet his hearing was good to the last, as we find by the very last passage of his life. When he reproved his Sons (which was before either of the Messages was brought to him from God) he told them that *he heard of their evil dealings by all the people*. And therefore it is said in my Text, that *he knew of their iniquity*. Whether he had any intimations of it from God before these Messages, concerns us not to know; he was sufficiently apprized of it by common fame and his own observation. He knew the facts, and must know that they were sins, even without the information of that Law which he was bound to study; and in men of his Sons profession and character, he knew that they were exceeding sinful.

IV. *ELI's*

IV. *ELI's* lenity towards his Sons, was an unworthy return of the favours which he had received from God. It is thought that he was the first of the family of *Ishamar* who was raised to the High-priesthood. But if he had received it by a long succession, the nature of his office led him in every thing to act with a zeal for God's glory, superior to all worldly considerations. But the Prophet charged him with this ingratitude, that he honoured his Sons above his God. And indeed the case it self speaks as much. For what man, who had a just regard for the honour of God, could have received two such Messages from him (to say nothing of the complaints of the people) and after all have suffered two such offensive Sons to have continued in the most sacred office till the day of their death? This was not to receive Laws, but to give them, and to say to God, Not thine, but my will be done.

Now for a grave man, who by his office was the Priest of God, the protector of his people, and the administrator of the divine Law, to maintain two men, because they were his Sons, in the most gross contempt and violation of that Law, against visions, revelations, complaints, and all the loud remonstrances of Heaven and Earth; was such a breach of trust, such an invasion of the divine authority, such a robbing God of his honour, as fully justified him in all the wrath and indignation which he poured out upon this licentious Family.

And if we do not often see the same pride and contempt of God visited with as sore a vengeance, it is not because it is now less offensive to him, but because he does not see fit to make daily examples of such offenders.

I doubt not but there have been numberless instances of parents and magistrates, against whom

the wrath of God has been revealed from Heaven, for this very fault here before us. But the case of *Eli* is so fully set forth, so clearly adjudged by the express word of God, that to all who believe and know that word it is a sufficient instruction how they ought to discharge the duty of Parents and Magistrates. That they should imprint this fundamental rule of Government upon their hearts, that God is the Lord and Father of all mankind; that we are all his children and servants, acting as in his Family, and accountable to him for the duties of our several stations and offices. That if we govern those committed to our charge with such partial affections as are subversive of his Law, we teach rebellion against our supreme Father, and are the ruin of those whom we so foolishly indulge. *Eli's* history tells us, that such indulgence is real hatred, under the false appearance of love, and that he and his children might have gone to their graves in the peace and favour of God, if he had brought them up with that strict nurture and discipline which he had power to exercise over them. By neglecting of which, he was sadly answerable for their manners, and for all which they suffered afterwards upon that account: And he was punished with the revelation of their tragical sentence, pronounced and repeated from the divine tribunal, which he lived to see executed upon them.

AND what could he say, when he heard of the Execution, and compared it with those Messages from God which had forewarned him of it? Must he not say, that it was not the Sword of the *Philistines*, but his own Misconduct in Government, which had slain his sons, with thirty four thousand of the people, and carried the Ark into captivity?

To the like Misconduct are certainly owing the calamities of other houses, cities, and nations. Where the education of children and government of people is not strict enough to maintain the fear of God, there the vices of uncleanness, intemperance, rioting and gaming, prophane swearing and cursing will grow predominant, and render people so vile, that like ill weeds they are fit for nothing but to be cut down and cast into the fire. So much does our good estate, both spiritual and temporal, depend upon good Government.

AND I believe there are no civilized people who are not sensible of this. To step a little out of the limits of sacred writ, I find the *Chinese* were perswaded, that the virtue of Governours was the surest way to make the Governed virtuous; and that their Kings thought themselves answerable to God for the wicked manners of their Kingdom. 'The virtue of Governours, say they, 'the art of ruling well, is the Gift of Heaven, 'but the virtue of subjects is the work of good 'Kings, *i.e.* the effect of their administration and 'good example. It is an easie matter, say they, 'to punish, but the glory of the Magistrate is 'to prevent crimes by his vigilant care and practice.' And they extol one of their Kings, that in a reign of twenty two years, the people felt no more of the weight of his authority, than we do of the Heavens over our heads. To make this out, they affirm that there was not one single Process in all *China*, not one Execution during his reign; so effectual was his care in preventing the growth of vice. Of another of their Princes they report, that when his country had been afflicted with a seven years famine, he interpreted it as God's displeasure for some male-administration in his Government, and thereupon devoted himself

himself to die, and become a sacrifice for his own and his peoples sins. But their history adds, that God was satisfied with the piety of his intension, and prevented the execution of it, by sending a speedy rain, which caused the Earth to bring forth abundantly. Now whether these Narratives were realities or fictions, is of no great moment for us to know. It is enough that we learn hence, what opinion these people had of good Government, that it was the foundation of all their enjoyments and happiness.

To all such therefore as have any command over others, from the poorest Parent to the highest Prince, the Oracle of God is this; 'If ye would
 • not be partakers in other mens sins, if ye would
 • not be the authors of their present and future
 • miseries, teach them to fear God and keep his
 • commandments; watch narrowly over their in-
 • clinations, and as you find them bent to any
 • evil courses, give a timely check to such pro-
 • pensions, and take care to restrain them by coun-
 • sels, by threatnings, by punishments, that they
 • become not vile in their doings; and by adding
 • to the corruptions, add to the calamities of the
 • World about them.'

How does that Mother's practice contradict her pretensions, who seems studious of her children's welfare, while she is careless of their manners? Who spares for no cost and pains in teaching them all fashionable accomplishments, but neglects the one thing needful, the fear of God? Who is quick in getting remedies for bodily distempers, while she suffers the diseases of the soul to rankle and grow inveterate; and sees without affrightment that monster of irreligion growing up in her Family, which subjects her dearest pledges to the fate of *El's* children.

May his Example awaken all such as are com-
mitted to it, and teach them to practise such obe-
dience towards their heavenly Father, as he re-
quires of them in his holy word, preferring his
honour above all earthly creatures, and causing all
the souls and people over whom they preside, to
praise him. The Generations of such faithful
men shall be blessed; peace shall be within their
borders, and plenteousness within their palaces.
In thus glorifying God, they will save themselves
and those committed to their charge, through his
merits and mediation who came to teach us this
obedience, and to give us the reward of it, Jesus
Christ our Lord, To whom, &c.



SERMON



SERMON XXIX.

On the Fourth Sunday after TRINITY.



I SAMUEL xiii. 13, 14.

And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.



At the beginning of this chapter we read, that Saul reigned one year, and when he had reigned two years over Israel, he chose him three thousand men. Of which words Interpreters have given several strained and far-fetched senses. I think the meaning of the sacred Writer is plainly this,

this, That hitherto he hath given us an account of what *Saul* did in the first year of his reign. How presently after his inauguration, he raised an army of three hundred and thirty thousand men, and fell upon the *Ammonites* who besieged *Jabesh-Gilead*, and delivered the *Gileadites* out of their hands. Upon which victory *Samuel* and all *Israel* assembled at *Gilgal*, where they confirmed *Saul* in the kingdom, and offered sacrifices and peace-offerings, and rejoiced greatly before the Lord.

Now he proceeds to tell us, that out of this great army he selected three thousand of the best and bravest men, for his companions in arms, and the rest he dismissed, every man to his own home. After he had reigned two years, he began to make attempts upon those formidable enemies of *Israel* the *Philistines*, who kept garrisons in several of their Tribes, from whence they molested them, and kept them under the yoke of oppression. These garrisons *Saul* was resolved to attack; for which purpose he gave his son *Jonathan* a third part of his chosen men; with which *Jonathan* fell upon the garrison of *Geba*, in the Tribe of *Benjamin*, and destroyed it.

As soon as the Lords of the *Philistines* heard the news of their loss, they were impatient to be revenged of the aggressors, and raised a mighty army against them, consisting of thirty thousand chariots, six thousand horse, and foot innumerable, which came and encamped at *Michmash* in *Ephraim* not far from *Gibeah* of *Benjamin*, where *Saul* dwelt, and struck such a terror into the *Israelites*, that they sunk into the ground, as we say; for they hid themselves in caves, and thickets, and rocks, and high places, and pits. And some of them went to their brethren, the two Tribes and a half that dwelt on the other side *Jordan*, as giving up their Inheritance in *Canaan* for lost.

382 SERMON XXIX On the

As for King *Saul*, he was in *Gilgal*, with such men about him as had the courage to stand by him; for many of his chosen men were affected with the general consternation. In *Gilgal* he was to continue seven days by appointment between him and *Samuel*. This appointment Commentators prove from ch. x. 8. where among the Instructions which *Samuel* gave *Saul*, when he had anointed him King, he speaks thus: *Thou shalt go before me to Gilgal; and behold I will come down to thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.* Accordingly we read in this xiiith chapter, that *Saul* tarried in *Gilgal* seven days, as *Samuel* had appointed him. At the end of which, despairing of *Samuel's* coming, and seeing his soldiers continually slipping away from him, he proceeded to offer a sacrifice, that he might be ready to come to an engagement with the enemy, as occasion should serve.

Now this is what King *Saul* is blamed for here in my Text. He offered sacrifice without the company of *Samuel*; which he should not have done. And yet because he seems to give a good reason for doing so, it concerns us to look more narrowly into the circumstances of this business, that we may see what it was which made the King so great an offender.

First then, some think that *Saul* offered the sacrifice with his own hands, and so invaded *Samuel's* office. But this opinion need not be admitted. For since it was the business of the Priest to offer sacrifice, and since we read, ch. xiv. that the Lord's priest *Abijah* the son of *Abitub*, *Ishabod's* brother, attended upon *Saul* about this time, we may justly suppose that the sacrifice was regularly and properly offered. *Saul* knew that this was the

Fourth Sunday after TRINITY. 183

the Priest's office, and would not sure take it out of his hands, when he had him in his company for that purpose.

AND tho' it be said, that *Saul offered the burnt-offering*, yet it does not follow from hence, that he sacrificed with his own hands. For so *David* and *Salomon*, and a great many more, are said to have built altars, and slain sheep and oxen, and offered incense; but the meaning is, that these things were done at their command; the Priests were the ordinary sacrificers, tho' the Prophets offered in extraordinary cases.

2dly, SOME Interpreters think that *Saul* mistook *Samuel's* appointment of this sacrifice, in respect of the time which he limited for it. And to make this out, they refer us to the tenth chapter of this book, which gives an account how *Samuel* anointed *Saul* to be King, and presently foretold him of several occurrences which should happen in his way, as soon as he was gone, by which he might rest satisfied that *Samuel* was a Prophet of God, and followed his direction in what he had now done. And then he parts with him with this Appointment; *Thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal, and behold, I will come down to thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.* This is our sense of this appointment; and thus *Saul* understood it. But these Interpreters, by altering a pause in the reading of these words, make them differ much in point of time, thus: *Go before me to Gilgal, and I will come to thee, to offer burnt-offerings and peace-offerings seven days: Be sure to tarry there till I come, and then I will shew thee how to proceed farther.* Now this way of reading and pronouncing the words makes *Samuel* to say, that they would spend seven days in their sacrifices;

ices; whereas, in the other way, they direct *Saul* to tarry seven days before the sacrifices began. *Saul* understood the words in the other sense, as plainly appears by his answer just before my Text. If he mistook the meaning of them, then he sinned ignorantly, and might not deserve such a severe sentence as is here passed upon him. For he thought he had fulfilled the Prophet's injunction, when he had waited seven days for him.

3dly, OTHERS therefore are perswaded, that *Saul* understood *Samuel* very well, but that in truth he did not tarry out the full time. I confess it is expressly asserted in the context, that *Saul* did tarry seven days, according to the set time which *Samuel* had appointed; and yet I cannot but favour their conjecture, who think that he sacrificed before the seventh day was ended: or at least before the eighth day was far enough advanced for *Samuel's* coming to him. He was either too early or too late in the day: too early, if the Prophet proposed to have sacrificed the same day that he came to *Gilgal*; and too late, if he meant to repose himself that night, and offer on the morrow. However it was, I doubt not but the day of their meeting was fixed, and well understood by both parties: for an involuntary mistake could not have proved so provoking to God, and so penal to the offender, as we find this proved in the consequences of it.

Now let us see what may be said on both sides of this case: What reason *Saul* had to anticipate the time of sacrificing, and how just it was in *Samuel* to pronounce such a sentence upon this anticipation.

SAUL was a young King, in the flower both of his age and his reign. He had been anointed for this very purpose, that he might most effectually raise the armies of *Israel*, and lead them out gallantly,

gallantly, and render them terrible to their enemies. He had wrought a great deliverance for them against the *Ammonites*, for which he had the praises of God and men. *Samuel* and all *Israel* went to *Gilgal*, and feasted and sacrificed, with great joy that they had such a King for their leader. This animated him with a desire of winning greater praise, by breaking the power of the *Philistines*, whose garrisons he begun to ruin. Whereupon they took the alarm. They considered that this new King might set a new edge upon the spirits and arms of *Israel*, and therefore resolving to crush him in the bud, they brought the whole weight of their forces upon him.

SAUL was now in *Gilgal*, where he waited with impatience for the coming of *Samuel*. Seven days seemed to him as seven years. He saw the enemy ravaging his Country, while his own men, instead of gathering about him, were daily decreasing for want of action. In order therefore to have his hands at liberty, he performed his devotions and offered his sacrifice, that he might be prepared to deal with his enemies whenever they should assault him. This is what he says in his apology for sacrificing; *I saw the enemy advancing, and my own people decreasing; and I said, The Philistines will come upon me before I have made my supplication to the Lord. I forced my self therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.*

ALL this looks well on the side of *Saul*. Here was a fair appearance of zeal for God and his People. He was eager to perform his duty to both: and I doubt not but it stirs the indignation of some, especially military men, to hear that such a brave spirit was cramped and kept back from action by the delays of the Prophet.

BUT then, to justify the Prophet, it is enough to say, that he was the mouth of God to the

King, and had no will or humour of his own to serve, but regulated his proceedings as he was moved by the divine Spirit. Of which, he had given *Saul* ample demonstrations. For when he advanced him to the kingdom, he assured him that he was directed to him by immediate revelation, and all the People were so sensible of the hand of God in it, that they called him, *the Lord's Anointed*.

If we consider *Samuel's* general character, we shall find that from twelve years old to this very time, he was revered by all *Israel* as a Prophet of God, appointed to direct their affairs by immediate revelation. Under his ministry they were successful both in peace and war. He had such power with God, that he failed not to obtain help from Heaven in difficult cases. In his administration he had no ambitious or covetous views for himself or his children, as he freely declared to all *Israel* before their new King, and appealed to them to accuse him of any such designs if they could; and they fully acquitted him. And this character he maintained throughout his transactions with *Saul*; for he plainly warned him from God of the penalties which he incurred by the wrong steps which he took; and when he was forced to leave him, as a man deaf to all his counsels, yet he ceased not to mourn and pray for him to the last. Which shows that he usurped no authority over King *Saul*, nor indulged any perverse humour or grudge against him, but honestly advised him for the best in every thing, just as he received commandment from God. Thus much *Saul* fairly confessed, when after the decease of *Samuel*, he applied to the Witch of *Endor* to bring him again from the other World; which he would never have done, if he had not esteemed him his best Counsellor, and the only man of all his People,

ple, who could inform him of the mind of God.

To this character of *Samuel* we must add the ancient method of divine Providence, continued in governing *Israel* at that time. For tho' he had raised up a King to reign over them, yet this King was not to act in extraordinary cases, without a message and direction from God by the mouth of his Prophet. The history of the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah*, from this time to the captivity of *Babylon*, abounds with instances of Prophets sent upon great occasions to tell these Kings what God would have them to do. And if the King despised the Prophet, the history assures us, that he sadly suffered for his contempt, because it was not man who was slighted, but God. For God ever asserted to himself the supremacy over *Israel*, and let their Kings know, that they were but his Deputies, and reigned by his authority, and for the fulfilling of his will and pleasure; which when they failed to do, he sent his Prophets to admonish them of their error; and these admonitions were delivered in such a style as if God himself had been the Speaker. And he was so far acknowledged to be so, that in all grievous calamities, it was one part of the publick confession of the Church, when they humbled themselves before God, that *they had not hearkned to the voice of his commandments which he had spoken to them by his servants the prophets.*

THIS brings us to see the sin of *Saul* in the case before us. He had received a command from God at the time of his Inauguration, to tarry at *Gilgal* till the Prophet should come thither, and bring him instructions from above what to do. *Samuel* had appointed to be with him in seven days, and it is supposed that he kept to his appointment; for *Saul* had offered but part of the

sacrifice when he came. We do not see the reason why he tarried seven days, but no doubt there was a good reason for it; and if he had tarried longer, *Saul* should have deferred the sacrifice till he had seen him, because he was to hear from him, upon that occasion, what God would have him to do.

BUT, says *Saul*, the army of the *Philistines* was advanced as near me as *Michmash*, and I was apprehensive they would fall upon me before I had performed my devotions. This carries a plausible appearance, but at the bottom it is no more but his setting up his own discretion and conduct against the positive command of God; and is the very same thing as if a subordinate officer in an army should engage the enemy contrary to the orders of his General. For this notion we must always carry along with us, that God was Governor in chief of the affairs of *Israel*, and gave out orders by his Prophets, as I have proved; and *Saul* had nothing to fear from the *Philistines*, so long as he obeyed these orders. To prove this, we need but turn back to the viith chapter of this book. There we read how an army of the *Philistines* came up to fight with *Israel* at *Mizpeh*, when this very Prophet *Samuel* was their Judge. To him the *Israelites* applied for help, and he applied to God by sacrifice and prayer: and the Lord heard him, and thundred with a great thunder on that day upon the *Philistines*, so that they presently fell before *Israel*, who pursued them and obtained such a victory over them, that they came no more into their coasts during the government of *Samuel*. And besides keeping the peace with them, they restored them many cities which they had formerly taken from them.

THIS should have satisfied *Saul*, (for he must needs have heard of it) that he was safe from the *Philistines*,

Philistines, so long as he obeyed the command of God. And it might likewise take off the force of his other pretence for sacrificing, that his People could not be held together for want of action. For what could all *Israel* avail without the help of God? and with his blessing how few were sufficient for the battel? As *Jonathan*, *Saul's* son, declares in this very case: for says he presently to his armour-bearer, ch. xiv. *the Lord is under no restraint, to save by many or by few.* And in this Faith these two fell upon a garrison of the *Philistines*, and begun such a slaughter among them, as ended in a great victory.

3dly, As to *Saul's* pretended piety in making supplication to God before he came to an engagement, I ask, What it was that he prayed for? He had reason to be perswaded, and I believe he actually was so, that it was God's will and pleasure he should perform his devotions in the company of his Prophet. And therefore to go to prayers without him, was in effect to pray that God would prosper *Israel* out of his own way, and in breach of his own word; and it implied that *Saul* thought there was no occasion for that farther direction from God, which he was expressly commanded to wait for. Now to seek to God to prosper any undertaking, in a way which is contrary to his own clear revelation, is so far from deserving the name of Piety, that it is the greatest affront which can be put upon infinite Wisdom. Such devotions are much better omitted than performed, and obedience to a plain injunction of God, is much to be preferred before such sacrifice.

THUS I have shown the reasons which *Saul* had to believe the word of the Prophet to be the word of God, and the obligations he lay under to obey it, and the weakness of his pretences for

390 SERMON XXIX. On the

breaking thro' it. From all which I conclude, that the sentence in my Text, which at first sight may seem harsh, is just, reasonable, and indeed unavoidable. For the premises being admitted, every one must pronounce that *Saul* acted foolishly and impolitickly in not observing what was injoyned him. For this was a touchstone of his Faith towards God, which if it had proved genuine, he would have been established in his kingdom for ever. But thus wilfully rejecting the word of his supreme Lord, he discovered too much of the libertine in him to make the divine Will the rule of his government. For which prevarication he was doomed to be set aside, and another substituted in his room, who would do it effectually, according to God's own heart.

IN this sentence it is questioned how those words could have been made good, that *Saul* and his children should have been Kings of *Israel* for ever, in case he had obeyed. For according to the prophecy of *Jacob*, the scepter was to be in *Judah*, whereas *Saul* was of the Tribe of *Benjamin*. This is easily answered, by saying (that which is very true) that God no otherwise decrees to bless men, but upon condition of their faith and obedience: which condition is sometimes expressed, but always to be understood in the divine Promises. And when it is not performed on our part, the obligation on God's part ceases, as is very clear in *Eli*'s case, mentioned ch. ii. 30. of this book. But suppose *Saul* had stood firm in his obedience, what had become of the house of *David*, for whom the scepter was decreed? How could both families have reigned? I answer, by a division of the Tribes into two kingdoms, as it afterwards happened. Tho' this is a supposition which need not be made. The difficulty is solved by the fore-knowledge of God, who revealed it to *Jacob*, that the reigning family

family should be, and continue to be of the Tribe of Judah; and yet *Samuel* might truly say, that *Saul* had lost the kingdom only by his disobedience, which God in his Omniscience foresaw that he would do.

Now to apply this particular case to a general use: That which the Prophet says to *Saul*, he says to all mankind; whosoever transgresses any righteous law, or rule of religion or virtue, thinking to find his pleasure or profit in such transgression, or walks unrestrained in the ways of the World, and the desires of his own heart, will find in the end that he has been acting a foolish part, building upon a rotten foundation, forfeiting all valuable enjoyments, deluded with a shadow of advantages, and entangled in the briers and thorns of real, inextricable dangers and calamities.

THIS conduct *Samuel* pronounces to be folly, and the fate of *Saul* has justified his sentence; and yet such folly is the applauded and modish wisdom of this World; and a man would be hardly thought fit to live in it, or to carry on the affairs of it, who could not upon various occasions step out of the bounds of religion and plain truth to serve himself or his friends.

WHAT censures, what outrageous reflections upon the ways of God, would such a scene as that in this chapter have occasioned, had it been acted amongst us? To see a young Prince, almost in the mouth of a powerful enemy, eager to give proofs of his valour, but having his hands tied up by an old Prophet, on a religious account! I fear his companions in arms would have been hastier than *Saul*, and have clamoured him out of his patience before half seven days were ended, and thrown a load of blasphemies upon the sacred Injunction, tho' authorized with divine credentials. But then I speak of an age wherein true piety is

shrunk into a very narrow compass; an age which swarms with blasphemers and scoffers more numerous than the *Philistines*, more noisom than the *Egyptian* plague of frogs; for like them they come into our houses and secret chambers, and to much worse purpose, poisoning the religious and moral Principles of too many about us. But in old *Greece* and *Rome* it was not so: they honoured their Gods, which yet were no Gods. They were right in their intention, though mistaken in the object of their worship. *Inauspicious* with them was the same with *unfortunate*: i. e. they never expected a good issue of a business, which was enterprised contrary to the warnings of their Divines. But in their grand affairs, especially at the beginning of a war, they waited till their Gods had signified their approbation, by sacrifice, augury, or some other way. Whosoever despised the *Omens*, was looked upon as very unfit to be trusted with the publick safety. He was reprobated with loud detestations; or if employed, proved unfortunate. Of which there are some examples in history. But I hasten to a conclusion, which I will draw from the latter part of my Text. *The Lord, says Samuel, hath sought him a man after his own heart, whom he hath appointed to be the captain of his people.* This man was *David*; who answered this character so well, that there are but two exceptions upon record against him, viz. his injuring of *Uriah*, and his numbering the People; which he attoned for by a speedy repentance. In all other particulars he is allowed, upon a review of his life, to have approved himself as here described. And since he was a great Prophet as well as a King, we cannot end better, than by hearing some of his sentiments and maxims of government.

1st, As to Wisdom, he assures us, that the fear of God is the first and fundamental principle of

Fourth Sunday after TRINITY. 393

all good policy. 2dly, For Power, he confesses in abundance of places, that it belongeth only to God. 3dly, For Strength; 'I will not trust in my bow, neither is it my sword that shall help me: but it is God that saveth me from mine enemies, and puts them to flight that rise up against me.' 4thly, For Alliances: 'Trust not in men, nor in any child of man, for vain is their help. It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in Princes.' 5thly, For Counsel; 'The counsel of the Lord shall endure for ever: as for that of the Heathen, he bringeth it to nought: he maketh the devices of the People to be of none effect, and casteth out the counsels of Princes.' 6thly, For Courage and presence of mind in the day of battel; 'He teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight. The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do against me. Tho' an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: I will not cast away my confidence, whatever forces shall be brought against me.' Lastly, (for we must be content with a taste of this great King's numerous Aphorisms) He declares that he always found it most for his interest and safety, to abide steadfastly by the Will of God, and that in waiting upon him his patience was always well rewarded.

FROM all this it appears, that *David* was indeed a man after God's own heart: and that *Saul*, by transgressing the divine Command in the instance before us, sullied that character of a politick and stout man, which he seemed most to aim at. For it had been his greatest wisdom to sit still, till God had allowed and directed him to enter upon action; and to have despised the insults of his enemies, would have argued a braver mind, than to be provoked by them to break the Commandment of God,

LET

LET this teach us to hold out against all temptations whatever, in pursuance of our duty to God: not to be frightned by dangers and difficulties, nor allured by seeming advantages, to break thro' the bounds which he hath set us. For tho' his Laws may seem to bind us hand and foot, and expose us a prey to our enemies, yet his good Providence will work out our deliverance, and bring us to a happy issue, if we will but follow it. *Keep innocence, and take heed to the thing that is right, for that shall bring a man peace at the last.* The observance of this rule would make us a happy World, and without it we shall always be miserable.

LET us therefore beseech God to incline the hearts of all who profess and call themselves Christians, to be sincere doers of his Will, according as it is revealed in the holy Gospel; in doing of which we shall be sure to find great reward, even the blessings of this life and of that which is to come, through the merits of the author and finisher of our Faith, Jesus Christ our Lord: To whom &c.



SERMON



SERMON XXX.

On the Fifth Sunday after TRINITY.



I SAMUEL xvii. 50.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him.

AFTER the Philistines had lost the Battle of *Michmasb*, related in the thirteenth and fourteenth Chapters, they were glad to be quiet for a while, and take time to recruit their shattered forces: but when they heard that King *Saul* had not obeyed the divine orders in his expedition against the *Amalekites*, and that the Prophet *Samuel* had withdrawn himself from his Court and Councils, and that thereupon the King was grown very much disordered in his mind; they took courage from these divisions in *Israel*, to renew the war. Accordingly they raised an army, and invaded the borders of the Tribe of *Judah*, and sat down near the valley of *Elah*.

THIS alarmed *Saúl* and the men of *Israel*, who were quickly up in arms to oppose their progress, and came up with them at the place aforesaid, and pitched their camp on the other side of the valley.

IN this posture the two armies continued forty days, facing one another, without doing any thing considerable. That which hindered them from coming to a general Engagement was this. The *Philistines* chole to end the war by a single combat; for which purpose they sent out their Champion compleatly armed, to challenge any man of the Army of *Israel* to come out and fight with him. This was *Goliath* of *Gath*, a chief city of the *Philistines*, of the race of those *Anakims* or Giants whose figure frightened the *Israelites*, when they were sent by *Moses* to spy out the land of *Canaan*. And this man daunted all their army at this time with his challenge. His height was six cubits and a span, *i. e.* ten foot high, near twice as tall as men of common stature, and no doubt proportionably thick and strong. This is an argument of the truth of sacred history, which reports nothing incredible upon this occasion: for even in the true histories of other countries we read that there have been men of a larger size. But the Mythology of the heathens, which is their sacred history, tells of Giants, who covered nine acres of ground, who walked over the seas, and whose heads reached above the clouds. I confess there seems to be something almost as extravagant in the report which the *Israelitish* Spies just now mentioned made of these very *Anakims*, *Numb. xiii. 33.* *We thought our selves,* said they, *but as Grasshoppers in comparison of them, and so they thought of us.* But this account of them is owned to be wrong, and must be corrected by the description of the *Philistine* here before us.

Fifth Sunday after TRINITY. 397

THE Armour of this Champion shows both his strength, and his care to secure himself and terrifie his Enemies. The weight of his helmet, target, coat of mail, and greaves, together with his unusual thick spear, must amount at least to two hundred and fifty pounds of our ordinary weight, reckoning the *Jewish* shekel at half an ounce. And it required the strength of six good lusty men to bear such a load of armour from morning till night as if it had been but an ordinary dress, and to march and fight in it with that agility of body which is necessary in battel.

THUS armed, and his shield-bearer going before him, the Champion presented himself before the camp of *Israel*, and called out with a loud voice to let them know, that he came in behalf of the army of the *Philistines*, to engage in single combat with any man of *Israel* whom they should chuse out and agree upon to match him; and if, 'said he, your man kills me, we will all be your 'servants; but if I prevail against him, you shall 'yield the superiority to the *Philistines*, and serve 'us.' This challenge he continued to repeat morning and evening for forty days together, which had no other effect than to daunt the *Israelites*, and scare them out of his way; though King *Saul* did all he could to animate them to the combat, causing it to be proclaimed throughout his army, that if any man would engage this *Philistine* and conquer him, he would reward him with great riches, and give him his daughter to wife, and make his Father's house noble in *Israel*.

WHILE these things were transacting, *David* came into the camp of *Israel*, which I suppose was but a few miles from his Father's house at *Bethlehem*, the scene of this action being in the Tribe of *Judah*. The occasion of his coming was, to bring provisions from his Father to his three eldest

eldest brethren who bore arms under *Saul*: for it seems it was the custom here, as well as in other nations of old, that the Soldiers, especially men of estate, bore their own charges when the war was in their own country.

As *David* was delivering his Father's Message to his Brethren, the *Philistine* came up and proclaimed his challenge with his usual confidence and defiance. This caused *David* to turn about and look at him with great indignation: and when he understood how often he had appeared in that insulting manner, he was much concerned, for the honour of his people, that no body had answered him. Then he enquired what the King said to it; and those about him, told him, that the King had offered the reward aforesaid to any man that would undertake the Combat. Whereupon he declared that he apprehended no danger in encountering with such a Blasphemer, and shewed himself so inclinable to answer him, that *Eliab* his eldest brother grew very angry at him, and told him it was much fitter for him to take care of his sheep in the Wilderness, than to meddle with military affairs, which was but to betray his pride and vanity. For *Eliab* thought it a reflection upon himself and the whole army, that his youngest brother who came there accidentally upon an errand, should be so forward to engage in a business, which neither he nor any of the army durst undertake.

HOWEVER *David's* words were carried to King *Saul*, who sent for him, desiring to hear from his own mouth what he had to propose. *David* assured him it was his resolution to fight with the *Philistine*, and begged of the King to give way to it, not doubting but by God's help he should obtain the victory. The King told him, he was but a young raw stripling, and no ways able to deal with the challenger, who be-

sides

slides his gigantick strength, had been bred to arms before he was born. But upon *David's* acquainting him with what he had experienced in his pastoral life in the Wilderness, how he had been obliged to fight twice in the defence of his Flock, once with a Lion, and afterwards with a Bear, and that he had killed them both with his own hands, adding, that he looked upon these victories as good omens, that the *Philistine* should be as one of them, seeing he had defied the armies of the living God, which was the spiritual Flock, and repeating it with a divine confidence, that the same Lord who had rescued him from the paws of the Lion and of the Bear, would deliver him out of the hand of this *Philistine*: The King, struck with admiration of the courage and piety of this young Shepherd, gave him his blessing and licence in these few hearty words, *Go, and the Lord be with thee.*

Now since King *Saul* objected the tender age and inexperience of *David*, as what made him an unequal match for the *Philistine*, let us see what weight there was in these objections.

I doubt not but we are all satisfied, that *David* was highly favoured with the divine assistance in this undertaking. Both he and his King look up to God, and commit their cause to him, as sensible that of themselves they were able to do nothing. And yet even humanly speaking, he was more a match for the *Philistine* than the Spectators at that time were aware of, or than we easily perceive by a cursory reading of his history.

We are apt to think that his being bred a Shepherd, was a disadvantage to him; but it was quite otherwise. We must not form our notion of the pastoral life in ancient times, from the manners of our own Shepherds at this day. For though men whose estates were in land, commonly
 employed

employed their children in the management of them; yet they did not neglect to educate them in such sciences as were fashionable, and necessary for the service of their country. Particularly we learn from the ancient writers of *Greece* and *Rome*, that men of the pastoral life were generally well skilled in arms. Their being much abroad in all sorts of weather, made them of a hardy constitution, and the necessary defence of their flocks and herds against robbers as well as savage beasts, often tryed their courage, and put them to the use of their weapons. At the same time those of honourable and wealthy Families were bred to the knowledge of religion, philosophy, and the Laws and Government of their country, and fitted for the greatest offices of it. Thus *Saul* was anointed King of *Israel*, when he was actually looking after his Father's cattel. Thus the first King and Founder of *Rome*, was a profest Shepherd. And about three hundred years after, *Quinctius Cincinnatus* a husbandman, was sent for by the *Romans*, as he was at plow in his field, and created their Dictator in a dangerous war with the *Æqui*; which he finished successfully in six months; and then laid down his office, and returned to his little Farm again. After him, *Cato* the Censor, who served all the grand offices of *Rome*, military and civil, was the most industrious and skilful husbandman of his time.

THESE instances I have mentioned to show, that in the most civilized parts of the World, men of the best abilities for the affairs of Government, have been bred up in the business of grazing and husbandry. And indeed we need not to have gone out of our own country for examples to prove that these things may consist very well together. And therefore when we read that *David* a Shepherd, had other great accomplishments, we

we are not to conceive that they were all miraculous gifts and sudden infusions; for the foundation of them was laid in a careful education.

2dly, As to *David's* age at this time, he was certainly young, very young in comparison of the *Philistine*, who I believe was about twice as old. *Saul* calls him a youth, and we presently hear how the *Philistine* despised him for his smooth and youthful countenance, and thought himself dishonoured by being matched with one so young. However, I cannot think him so young as fifteen or seventeen, as some Interpreters have conjectured. For I observe, that when *Saul's* Courtiers advised him to seek out an ingenious Harper, who might relieve him with his play, when he was in melancholy fits; one of his servants answered, *Behold, I have seen a Son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him.* This was some time, probably a year, before *David's* engagement with the *Philistine*; and even then we must conclude him, from this character, to have been upwards of twenty, rather than under; for nothing under twenty could deserve the character here given of an able man, a good soldier, and prudent in speaking and acting. Besides this, we may observe farther, that when *David* came to *Saul*, he did not use him only as a Musician, but made him his armour-bearer, which was a place that required a man of a good appearance. And presently after his conquest of the *Philistine*, *Saul* made him chief Captain of all his forces, and *Jonathan* presented him with his own best suit of apparel; so that we may well allow him to have been twenty three years old at this time. More than this it is not convenient to allow, for he was King at thirty, and the transactions between this and

402 S E R M O N XXX. *On the*

that time were enough to fill up the intermediate space of seven years.

3dly, *DAVID* was a man of uncommon courage and presence of mind; as we have heard from his recommender; and from his own relation how he had killed two of the fiercest and strongest of wild beasts. To this natural bravery a great supernatural addition had been lately made; for *Samuel* had privately anointed him to succeed *Saul* in the Kingdom of *Israel*; from which time it is said that *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him*. His Genius was elevated, and his mind disposed to all great undertakings, especially such as concerned the publick welfare. Accordingly when he came into the army to salute his Brethren, and had heard how often the *Philistine* had repeated his challenge, and that none of the *Israelites* had answered it, he looked upon himself to be providentially sent to vindicate the honour of God and his people. For who so proper to appear in this cause, as he who was chosen of God, and appointed to be the future Shepherd of *Israel*? No doubt but *David* encouraged himself with this consideration, that God who had given him an earnest of the Kingdom, would not suffer him to fall in so just and necessary a defence of it. In this faith he addrest himself to the Combat with full assurance of the victory; though the ground of this assurance was not known to the Spectators.

4thly, *DAVID* shewed himself a well-advised man, in not fighting his antagonist in his own way, and at his own weapons. For in a close fight this monstrous strong man must needs have proved invincible, and for such fight alone he seems to have been prepared. And though *David* was once, by the direction of *Saul*, armed like him, yet he chose to lay aside all encumbrance, and encounter in his Shepherd's dress, just as he

came

came from his flock; which was certainly best for the way of fighting which he chose, which was at a distance; and it bred security in his antagonist, who seeing a naked man advancing, and observing no other weapon in his hand but a Shepherd's crook, began to triumph, as sure of a cheap and speedy victory.

BUT the *Philistine* did not know that *David* was an excellent Slinger, and intended to attack him with stones at a distance. I suppose he brought his Sling with him; which being a leathern thong, or piece of canvass or cordage, with a loop at one end to hang it on the fingers, might be carried any where in his scrip or pocket without any trouble. And for stones, he picked up five, as many as he thought there could be occasion for, upon the spot.

NOW when the *Philistine* saw *David* running towards him, and imagined he was coming to handy-blows, he received a stone from his Sling, which piercing his forehead, sunk down into his brain, and caused him to fall upon his face to the ground.

THIS gives us occasion to speak of the use of the Sling, which did good service in the wars of old times, as we are assured by Historians of the best reputation. And though it may seem to us but a trifling instrument, and we cannot conceive how it could carry a stone with any certainty, which was discharged by the swing of the arm; this is because it is grown into disuse, and we want to be informed by experience what it will do. But when it was practised, we know there were Slingers who were able to do very certain, and very distant execution. The Author of the Book of *Judges* writes, Chap. xx. 16. that in the Tribe of *Benjamin*, there were seven hundred left-handed Slingers, who could hit a mark at a

404 SERMON XXX. On the

convenient distance to a hairs breadth, and not miss. And to make this probable, Commentators observe, that when the *Philistines* had disarmed the *Israelites* of swords and spears, as we read they did, it made the oppressed so much the more diligent in the exercise of the Sling, which could not be taken from them. It is reported of the *Balears*, the ancient Inhabitants of *Majorca* and *Minorca*, Islands belonging to the crown of *Spain*, that they bred their children to this exercise from their cradle; and that their mothers set up their victuals every day as a mark, which they suffered not the children to eat of, till they had hit it. *Philostratus* in the life of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, Book ii. Chap. 12. tells of certain *Indian* Slingers, who had as sure a hand as the *Benjamites* before mentioned; for they would strike the hair of a child's head, and never hurt the head it self. *Xenophon*, in his history of the wars between the *Persians* and *Grecians*, observes that on the *Grecian* side there was a band of Slingers from the Isle of *Rhodes*, who were too hard for the *Persian* Archers. And *Dion Cassius* writes, that when *Mark Anthony* fought with the *Parthians*, the *Roman* Sling over-mot the *Parthian* Bow; which we know was famous above all others.

THIS leads us to consider how far a Slinger could do execution. Those who have writ comparisons of the ancient and modern art of war, say, that a good Sling hath carried its full force to the distance of six hundred foot. How strong that force was, will scarce be believed by us who have lost the use of this art. But I must relate what I find in the writings of those Ancients who were well acquainted with it. Many of the *Roman* Authors affirm then, that a good Slinger would discharge a leaden ball (for this they sometimes used) with such rapidity, that it would even melt

Fifth Sunday after TRINITY 405

melts in the flight. The grave *Seneca* speaks of this, as of a known thing. 'Motion, says he, rarefies the air, and rarefaction inflames it. Thus a bullet thrown out of a Sling, melts by the attrition of the air, as much as by fire.' And thus we have seen the power of the Sling; and supposing, as we well may, that *David* had a good hand at it, we see what advantage he had over the *Philistine*, by fighting him in a way which he was not prepared for. His Sling and his Stone was as sure to prevail, as the very best fire-arms in the hand of the most expert Marksman at this day.

BUT when I set forth the Power of this Instrument, and the Skill which *David* had to use it, I have no design to derogate from the Providence of God, who blest the hand which shot at the *Philistine*. I have only observed in this and other like cases, that God loves to work by probable means, and crowns honest art and industry with success. And the praise of such success is ever ascribed to him by all great and good men, whatever other means they might have to attain it.

AND herein *David* excelled King *Saul*, and perhaps all other Kings that ever reigned upon Earth, that as he rejoiced to do the will of God, and to fight the battels of the Lord, so he went about his work with a singular alacrity, a marvellous affiance in God, and dependance upon his arm for succour and assistance. When he heard the proud boastings of this *Philistine*, it fired his zeal for God and his country, and he did not stand to act the nice Casuist, and spend time in debating whether it were lawful to engage in this combat. He considered this *Philistine* no otherwise than as the Lion and the Bear which came to devour his Flock. He knew that by the general law and sentence of God, the *Philistines* were doomed to destruction,

destruction, and that this had more particularly deserved it, by the reproachings and revilings which he had cast out upon God and his people. Therefore he entred the Lists as one that fought under the Banner of the God of *Israel*, and appeared in vindication of his honour and glory. And so he expresses himself when the *Philistine* disdained him for coming against him with a Shepherd's crook: *Thou comest to me, says David, with a sword, and a spear, and a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand, and I will smite thee, and take off thy head, and I will give the carcases of your host to the fowls of the air and to the beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not by sword and by spear. For the battel is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands.*

I recite these words of *David* to observe what a strain of piety runs through them. It must needs fill the hearts of his people with inexpressible joy, to hear their young Shepherd speak so like a Prophet, Priest, and King, so incomparably beyond any thing that they could expect from his age and experience. And it was a plain argument that even then *David* was inspired with a great measure of the Spirit of God.

By the inspiration of the same Spirit what power may we receive from on high to strengthen us, what courage to animate us, what counsel to direct us, if we will but resolve, after the example of *David*, to set God always before us, and desire to be instruments of his glory, and acknowledge him before all the World to be higher than the highest, and that he doth whatsoever pleaseth him in Heaven and in Earth!

How

How can such weak striplings as most of us are, encounter with the gigantick force of our Enemies ghostly and bodily? Why even as he did here, by virtue of our faith and trust in the name of the Lord our God. By his assistance a staff or a stone in our hand shall prevail against all the swords and spears of the mighty. Let us be but children in comparison of these over-bearing men; but let us be sure to be the children of God, and then they cannot hurt us. If we have no outward armour to put on, or if with tender *David* we cannot bear it when it is on, yet while we are the children of God, we are better fortified than all the armies of the Aliens. *We have the shield of faith, the breast-plate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and the divine promises, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.*

Was *David* the Lord's Anointed? why such are all good Christians in a spiritual sense; by the unction of his holy Spirit we are made Kings and Priests unto our God, we are enabled to vanquish and triumph over those three mystical *Goliaths*, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from them, and he will deliver us, if we faithfully serve him. Only let us be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, and let not our hearts fail us at the monstrous bulk, the threatening looks, the terrible weapons of these Enemies.

Is it not enough for us that we have Omnipotence on our side? Can any thing hurt us, while we are covered with the wings of the most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty? All the danger of our warfare is, lest we should make peace and contract alliances with the Enemies of God and our Souls, which the heavenly Law has utterly forbid: for in so doing we should lose

468 SERMON XXX. On War

our great strength, and forfeit our privilege of the divine protection. So that it is their friendship, not their enmity, that can hurt us. Let us not exchange our humility for their pride, nor our piety for their blasphemy, nor our trust in God for confidence in the creature, in an arm of flesh; and we are safe. The weapons of our warfare are the Graces of the divine Spirit, which though they may seem weak and foolish to the World, yet this weakness of God will be found stronger than men, and this foolishness much beyond their wisdom.

AND let us not forget to imitate *David*, in keeping our spiritual Enemies at a distance; for if we suffer them to come close up to us, they may prove too strong for us. I speak of those things which are without us; among which we may reckon all sorts of ill company. To keep them at a distance, is absolutely necessary for our safety, and requires but firmness of mind enough to refuse their invitations. If sinners entice us, we should reject their allurements; which are easily withstood at the beginning: but if once complied with, they quickly entangle us in the cords of their iniquities and the bonds of their sins.

THE same may be said of any of the objects of Sense, which if admitted into the mind, may be too hard for religion and reason. The best way to deal with them, is to keep them at a distance. We should make a covenant with our eyes, that we will not look upon them, and with our ears, that we will not hear them. At a distance they are no more than *Mormo's* and pictures of Giants; but their influence increases by their approach, and the impressions we take from them shew that there is a dangerous power in them.

To conclude; LET us not encounter the infernal *Goliath*, the grand Enemy of our Religion
and

Fifth Sunday after TRINITY. 409

and virtue, in his own way, nor fight him at his own weapons: for he has many stratagems and devices, whereby he lies in wait to surprize us, and betray us unto death. But in all our conflicts with him, let us hearken to the voice, and observe the orders of our Spiritual Leaders, the Prophets, Apostles, and Ministers of God's word, who were well trained in the discipline of this spiritual warfare. Above all, let us look stedfastly unto Jesus the Captain of our Salvation, the *Messiah*, the Anointed of God, of whom David was but a Type, *who hath destroyed him who had the power of death, i. e. the Devil; and hath delivered all true Christians who through fear of death had been all their life-time subject to bondage. To him, with &c.*



SERMON

SERMON XXXI.

On the Sixth Sunday after TRINITY.



2 SAMUEL XIX. I.

And it was told Joab, Behold, the King weepeth and mourneth for Absalom.

WHEN *David*, at the instigation of a pernicious lust, had slain his servant *Uriah* with the sword of the children of *Ammon*, God passed this sentence upon him by the Prophet *Nathan*, that the sword should never depart from his house: and we presently read how the sentence begun to be executed. His first-born *Amnon* was assassinated by his third son *Absalom*, for committing a rape upon *Tamar*, *Absalom's* sister by *Maacab* the daughter of *Talmai* King of *Geshur*. And it is hard to say, whether the Rape it self, or the way of revenging it, were the greater affront both to the paternal and regal authority of *David*. *Absalom* had reason heinously to resent the outrage done to his sister; but to take upon him the execution of justice, was to invade his father's prerogative; and shewed that he had a spirit capable of rebellion.

DAVID

DAVID was extremely offended at *Amnon* for what he had done, and punished him no doubt with all the severity of frowns and reproofs: but it doth not appear that his displeasure went any farther. However, *Absalom* was resolved that he should not escape so. Nothing would satisfy him but the life of the offender, which he took away in this manner.

Two years after the injury above-mentioned, says *Josephus*, when it might be presumed that *Absalom's* resentment of it was cooled, he had a great sheep-shearing in *Baalzephon* a city of *Ephraim*, to which he invited the King his father, and all his brethren. The King excused himself, because he would not make the entertainment too chargeable, but gave his children leave to be at it. They all went, and gave *Absalom* an opportunity to execute the revenge, which he had long meditated. For when the guests were well warmed with the Entertainment, his servants (upon a signal given them by their master) fell upon *Amnon* and slew him.

WE need not say how astonishing this murder was, not only to King *David*, but to all that heard of it. *Absalom* knew there could be no safety for him, but in a speedy flight. He therefore fled to the King of *Geshur*, a neighbouring Prince, who was his grand-father by the mother's side; and there he continued three years.

At the end of which he was restored to his own Country by *Joab's* means; who perceiving that the King had a longing desire to recall him, and only wanted some plausible ground for it, he caused such an address to be made to him, as obtained leave for *Absalom* to return to his own house: but he was expressly forbidden to come to court, that both he and all men might take notice how much the King abhorred such a way of shedding blood, and how loath he was to pardon it, even in his own beloved son.

WHEN

WHEN *Absalom* had lived privately two years without seeing the King his father, he grew impatient of his solitude, and bemoaned himself to *Joab*, declaring that if he had foreseen this, he would have remained still an exile in *Geshur*; and that even now he would rather suffer death, than lye under his father's displeasure any longer. These passionate expressions moved *Joab* to intercede for him, and *David* to admit him into his presence and favour.

BUT it quickly appeared, that *Absalom* had not solicited this reconciliation out of a dutiful love and desire to be near his father, but to get the greater advantage to carry on a plot against his life and government, which he had even now formed in his mind, and for the accomplishing of which he procured men of arms to attend him under the notion of a guard. Every day also he rose early, and presented himself before the King's palace, and conversed with such people as resorted thither for justice: and to any man who had lost his cause, he would say, *the cause was good, but there was no man deputed of the King to hear it.* Which was a calumny. For we are assured before, ch. viii. 15. that *David* executed judgment and justice unto all his people: which he could never have done, if he had not deputed Judges and proper Magistrates to assist him in it. But this accusation passed for truth with those who having a bad cause, lost it. And they readily joined their wishes with *Absalom*, when pretending to bewail their hard fortune he said, *Oh that I were made a judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause, might come to me, and I would do him justice.* And it was so, that when any man came near to *Absalom* to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him and kissed him. By which address he stole the hearts of the *Israelites*, who were weak enough to

be cheated with such empty condescensions out of their duty to a worthy King, and at last out of their lives and fortunes.

IN the fortieth year of King *David's* reign, reckoning from the time of his first anointing by *Samuel*, and about four years after the reconciliation above-mentioned, *Absalom* petitions the King for leave to go to *Hebron*, and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for restoring him to his own Country, according to a vow which he had made in his exile. But this was abusing religion to cover his rebellious design.

FOR when he came to *Hebron*, attended with a great concourse of People, and particularly with two hundred citizens of *Jerusalem*, he sent for *Achitophel* the *Gilonite*, once *David's* best counsellor, but now some way discontented and alienated from him, and caused himself to be proclaimed King by sound of trumpet. Whereupon the men whose hearts he had stolen away, resorted to him from all parts: for he had his accomplices in all the Tribes of *Israel*, who presently spread the news, as he had directed them, that such a day *Absalom* was crowned King in *Hebron*.

HEBRON was a city in the Tribe of *Judah*, very considerable both for its strength and antiquity. It was the place where *David* began his kingdom, and where he reigned seven years. And lying but twenty miles southward from *Jerusalem*, it alarmed *David* with an apprehension that *Absalom* would quickly be with him. Wherefore being loath to be shut up within walls, or to subject his People to the miseries of a siege, and not having forces in a readiness to take the field, he resolved to fly to the farther side of *Jordan*, carrying with him his great officers and most faithful friends, and leaving the government of his royal house to the management of his concubines.

THE

414 SERMON XXXI. On the

THE King, in this retreat, wanted not the attendance of a great many men, among whom were six hundred old soldiers, who had been the companions of his troubles in the days of King *Saul*. *Ittai the Gittite*, a great officer and a foreigner, he would willingly have excused from this wandering. *Return to thy place*, said he, *and abide with King Absalom*, *for thou art a stranger and an exile*. *Why should I make thee go up and down with us*, who *camest hither but yesterday*? *Return with thy brethren; mercy and truth be with thee*. But this stout man answered, *As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord shall be, whether in life or death, even there also will thy servant be*. The King seeing his unshaken fidelity and affection to him, was greatly comforted, and accepted of his service.

WHEN *David* was got into the Wilderness on the banks of *Jordan*, *Absalom* entred *Jerusalem*, and took possession of the royal palace. And here it was that *Achitophel* advised him to abuse his father's concubines, and make them his own. 'For' (says he) from thence the people will be persuaded that you and your father can never be reconciled; and so they will stand firm to your cause: whereas in the present circumstances it may be suggested that a peace will be concluded between the father and son, at the expence of certain subjects, who must be sacrificed for what is past.' *Absalom* did as *Achitophel* advised, and thereby fulfilled the curse which *Nathan* had denounced against *David* for abusing *Uriah's* wife, *that an adversary should arise out of his own family, who should do the like to his wives in a publick manner, in the sight of the sun*.

BUT now the measure of *Absalom's* impieties filled up apace, and the hand of divine Justice began to lay hold of him, and hurry him to his deserved

served punishment. For the next thing which came under his consideration was, how to manage the war against his father.

AND here his counsellors were divided. *Achitophel* required a light army of twelve thousand choice men, with which he proposed to pursue *David* without delay; 'And I will surprize him,' said he, weary with travel, and weak-handed, 'and I will terrifie those about him, so that they shall flee; and I will smite the King only. This will reduce all *Israel* to your obedience: when your father is cut off, they have none but you to own for their King. Pursue him then without loss of time, and you will establish your self without a war.' This counsel pleased *Absalom* and all the knowing men about him: and it was certainly well grounded. For wicked devices must be executed speedily; it is dangerous to deliberate about them. Delays give people time to think; to weigh the sin and the danger, and to shrink from the prosecution.

BUT *Hushai*, who was taken into *Absalom's* Councils, tho' secretly in *David's* interest, gave quite contrary advice, and enforced it with the following arguments. 'Sir, said he, you need not be told, that your father is a great captain, and has the best of soldiers about him. You must not think that he is insensible of his present circumstances, or that he can be easily surprized. He knows the advantages of war, both by night and day. He is certainly now in the field, but his forces are not collected into one body. He has laid several ambushes, which will break out upon your men, and put them into disorder, and the report will run, that *Absalom* is routed; and your soldiers which are behind will believe it, and quit the field. For all *Israel* knows his conduct in war; that he is perfect at stratagems, and that

416 SERMON XXXI. On the

that nothing but numbers can oppress him. Let us not therefore think of encountering him with a flying Squadron; but raise all *Israel* from *Dan* to *Beersheba*, as the sand upon the sea-shore for multitude, and appear in your own person at the head of them. And then we shall fall upon him, where-ever we find him, as the dew upon the grass, i. e. we shall infinitely out-number him, so that it will be impossible for any one of his men to escape us. Nor will we be afraid of his fortifying himself in the best fenced city. The hundred thousands of *Israel* will be sufficient to drag every stone of the walls and buildings of that city into the ditch.

THIS looked like brave, open, safe advice; and it was delivered with such an emphasis, that it gave a turn to *Absalom* and his Senators, and brought them to be of the same opinion. However the author of it would not venture it, as knowing *Achitophel's* to be the best; and therefore he sent immediate intelligence to *David* of what had passed in *Absalom's* Councils, advising him not to lodge another night in the field, lest his adversaries should after all follow the counsel of *Achitophel*; but pass over *Jordan*, where he would be certainly safest from the pursuit of his enemies.

ACCORDING to *Hushai's* counsel, *Absalom* took time to raise a great multitude of forces to make war upon his father, and made *Amasa* General of his army, opposing him to *Joab*, who was his cousin-german; for they were both descended from daughters of *Jesse*, and sisters of *David*, so that *David* was their uncle. With this army *Absalom* passed over *Jordan*, and pitched his Camp near his father in the Country of *Gilead*.

FOR *David* was now got on the other side *Jordan*, and encamped in a strong city, says *Josephus*, the best fortified in that Country; but he does not tell

tell us the name of it. There he was kindly entertained by all the great men of those parts, who were moved to succour him, partly thro' compassion of his present circumstances, and partly in contemplation of his former felicity. So that he and his men wanted for nothing.

AND tho' he had but a handful of soldiers in comparison of *Abalom* (*Josephus* makes them four thousand, the sacred history hath not determined their number) yet being often tried and well-disciplined men, it was thought best to come to a decisive battel, and not tarry till *Abalom* should attack him.

DAVID offered to put himself at the head of his men; but his friends would not suffer it: 'For,' said they, 'if we should be defeated in your company, all would be lost. But if one half of us should be cut to pieces while you are in the city, the enemy would think it no great advantage, because they will be perswaded that you have means to re-inforce us, and renew the battel.' This counsel was approved, and *David* remained in the city. And as his men went out, he placed himself at the gate, and gave them his blessing, and exhorted them to behave themselves valiantly; but withal he laid a strict charge upon all the captains and officers, that as they loved him, they should offer no violence to his son *Abalom*.

JOAB, *David's* General, drew up his men, and offered *Abalom* battel: who likewise advanced with his soldiers; who being very numerous, fell on with great assurance of victory, and animated one another with a near view of rewards from their master, if by this day's action they could put him in quiet possession of the throne of *Israel*.

BUT *Joab* and his men being the best soldiers of all *Israel*, quickly broke thro' *Abalom's* undisciplined army, and put them to flight. And the

Country round about being very woody, was a great impediment to those who sought to make their escape, so that there was a slaughter of twenty thousand men.

ABSALOM, mounted upon a swift mule, fled with the rest; and his mule passing under an oak, his large head of hair, which I suppose was tyed at the ends upon this occasion, caught in the boughs of the tree, and so entangled him that he hung by it, and his mule went from under him. A soldier of *Joab's* observing this, went and told his master, who came and dispatched *Ab-salom*, and cast his body into a pit in the wood, and laid a great heap of stones upon it. Then he blew a trumpet to recall his men from pursuing *Israel*; and *Israel* went away, every one to his tent.

THUS *Ab-salom's* rebellion ended with his life: but his father's sorrow for him ended not here. The news of his death went so near *David's* heart, that it almost strangled him with grief, and overwhelmed him with tears; and he professed he would have chose to have lost his kingdom and his life too, for the saving of his son *Ab-salom*.

AND yet how unworthy was this Son of such a Father, and the cause of how many tears and groans! *Ab-salom's* character has nothing good in it, but this, that he was a beautiful man: but the ornaments of his body were horribly sullied by the corruptions of his mind, which rendred him as great a monster as any we find in ancient Tragedy. For he was doubly guilty of parricide, in assassinating his Brother, and rebelling against his Father. Of both which heinous offences behold the aggravations. When he slew his Brother, it was two years after the abuse of his Sister, during which, passion had time to cool, and submit to reason. It was at an entertainment of his own making, in his own house,

house, for his own nearest friends, who came to partake of it at his own earnest invitation. It was perpetrated in the presence of all his Brethren, and with the violation of those Laws of hospitality, which the greatest *Barbarians* ever held to be most sacred. It was a murder which he knew would pierce the soul of his Father with the acutest grief, for the death of one Son, and the guilt of another. --- With all these aggravating circumstances was this fratricide attended.

2dly, *ABSALOM* rebelled against his Father, after he had obtained his pardon for the murder of his Brother. After he had repeated his addresses to be recalled from banishment, declaring that he had rather die than live any longer excluded from the presence of God and his Father, he abused these pretences of religion and filial piety, to carry on a design most odious to God and man. 'Let the King, said he, but admit me to wait on him, and then let him kill me, if he find iniquity in me.' This he spoke with a heart full of sedition and rebellion. And 'Let thy servant, I pray thee, go to *Hebron*, to offer a sacrifice which I vowed while I was at *Geshur* in *Syria*, saying, If the Lord shall bring me again indeed to *Jerusalem*, then will I serve the Lord.' This he said with the air of a Devotee, when he intended no other service than that of his own ambition, and had sent out Emissaries to acquaint the Conspirators, that he was going to begin his reign in *Hebron*. What a black Fury was here, under the appearance of an Angel of light! What a Son, who could take arms against his own Father, and attempt with all his might to dethrone him and murder him! What a lover of his people, who could involve them in a rebellion which brought twenty thousand of them to woful destruction! What a corrector of the incest of his Brother and Sister,

who committed much worse with his Father's Concubines ! For such a Son as this *David* mourned and wept, and wished that he had redeemed him from the Grave with the loss of his own life. But what if he had acted a quite contrary part, and had cut off this *Absalom* with the sword of Justice when he assassinated *Amon* : or at least had rejoiced with his people, and given thanks to his General, for fairly ridding him in the day of battel, of a Son of so much mischief and reproach ? Would not this have been much more to *David's* honour and commendation ?

MUCH better Sons have been sentenced to death by their own fathers, after they had fought bravely against a common Enemy, and conquered, only because they happened to transgress the military orders of their Fathers as their Generals. Such a sentence *Seul* passed upon his Son *Joraban*, though the people rescued him, and very justly, from suffering by it. Such another *Manlius Torquatus* the Roman Dictator passed upon his Son, for fighting successfully, but contrary to his orders, and it was executed upon him. These were instances of severe discipline, but still it was discipline ; and the Law of arms and necessity of obeying orders justified the severity of Parents even towards their best children.

How much more should Parents be willing to give up children to any legal punishment, who contain themselves within the bounds of no Laws, but live without any fear of God or regard of man ? To indulge such children, and to excuse them from the lash, is to hatch calamities for the common-wealth. I do not believe there is a greater fountain of publick miseries, than the loose education of the children of superior and governing Families, who by flatteries and fond treatment are taught to think, that they are above the Laws of religion

Sixth Sunday after TRINITY. 421

religion and virtue: For no other reason, but because they are more out of the reach of common punishments than lesser people. But when will this inveterate Evil be remedied? We see that even *David* was not innocent of this fond indulgence, who though he was a Prophet, yet could not foresee that which almost any one might have foretold him without a spirit of Prophecy, that he must never expect any good from this Son, after he had so basely assassinated his Brother.

For there are some sins so crying and enormous, that however the Sinner may escape the pains of death, yet they so despoil him of all virtue and goodness, they so banish the Spirit of God from him, they render him so unblest, unhappy, unfortunate in the administration of affairs, that he should never be entrusted with them, but live in a state of sequestration, and do penance in the loss of such countenance, society, honours and employments, as ought to be the distinguishing ornaments of the innocent and the virtuous.

DAVID was too indulgent a Father; but yet I believe it was not his natural affection only, which caused him so sadly to lament the death of *Absalom*. There was a deeper root of this bitterness, which I hinted at in the beginning, viz. the judgment of God for his cruelty to *Uriah*, that the sword should never depart from his house, but that out of his own Family an evil one should arise, who should retaliate his injuries. This he must see fulfilled upon him in this Son *Absalom*. And no doubt but *David* bore this sentence in mind, and was continually applying it in the course of this rebellion. And seeing how manifestly God had laid this burthen upon him, in the tragical end of two of his children, it mightily afflicted his Spirit, and he would gladly have fallen a sacrifice for his own sin, if thereby he might have expiated

ated it, and have released his posterity from any farther obligation to pay the debt of it.

THIS I take to be the reason why those Psalms which he composed on this occasion, are so penitential, and why, in some passages of them, he begs so earnestly of God to remember his former loving-kindness and mercy towards him; and to blot out those sins and offences of his younger days which had embittered his comforts, and mingled his drink with weeping. This is the reason why he expresses so much satisfaction which he found in the confession of his sins to God, and the inestimable blessing of peace in the pardon of them. Briefly, this is the ground of his instructive Lessons and counsels to others, that in departing from God they would plunge themselves into an ocean of sorrows; and that the only way to be surrounded by his mercies, is to abide in his fear and love: that *light springeth up to the righteous, and joyful gladness to such as are true-hearted.*

LET us hearken to the words of this man of great experience, and learn of him the causes of prosperity and adversity. Let us hear how he complains of the panting of his heart, the failure of his strength, the dimness of his eyes, the revolt of his friends, the strangeness of his relations and acquaintance; and what apprehensions he expresses of danger from the power, the rage, the snares of his Enemies. And yet he was endued with an extraordinary measure of wisdom and courage; he had great skill in war, he had great outward means to help himself. But he esteems them all as empty, vain, and ineffectual, without the blessing of God: By whose help he often boasts that he was able to do every thing, even when naked and destitute of outward assistance; of the truth of which he alledges his frequent experience. And knowing that the divine favour and blessing could
not

not be lost, but by some transgression of God's Law, he therefore constantly imputes his misfortunes to his sins, especially to those grievous ones committed in the case of *Uriah*. These were the clouds which obscured his light, the mire which sunk him, the wounds which would not suffer him to take his rest.

WE have heard how sin was the cause of *David's* misfortunes, and the sting of his afflictions. If we would avoid the like doleful effects, let us refrain from the like provocations. For if *these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* If God spared not so great a King, who had fought his battels, and vindicated his honour upon all occasions; and who was moreover a most devout Prophet, and Author of the greatest part of the Prayers and Praises of the Church; if God visited his iniquity with such a rod, and his sin with such scourges as we here read of, what may those expect who have *David's* sins, with little or nothing of his merits to balance them?

WELL, such, and far greater Sinners have passed through the World with much lighter correction. I will rest in the example of *Absalom* here before us, who was wholly wicked, and yet smarted but little for it. For his easie exile with the King his Grandfather for the murder of his Brother, and his death by the hand of *Joab* for all his horrid attempts against his own Father, were punishments which bore no proportion to the greatness of his crimes. And the same may be said of the greatest of Sinners in all ages and parts of the World.

WHAT then? Shall we presume to say, that God's anger against sin is not always the same? That be far from us; for then how should the Judge of all the earth do that which is right? But such different dispensations are an infallible proof of a future state of rewards and punishments; whence we
may

may illustrate the justice of God thus: That he gives impotent Sinners their portion of good things in this life, and their evil things in that which is to come: But on the contrary he corrects the misdoings of his own children here, that he may fit and prepare them for his family in the Kingdom of Heaven. And this was exactly David's case: He sinned, but God would not suffer him to continue in sin, but held the rod over him, and kept up in him a Spirit of Holiness and Virtue. The divine corrections filled him with prayers, and deliverances with praises, which make up that Book of *Psalms* whereby God is daily glorified throughout the Church militant on earth, and which have raised this great King and eminent Prophet to be a Chief in the spiritual *Garden*, a sweet *Psalms* in the Choir of God's Temple not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens. Unto which may our gracious Father vouchsafe to bring us all, by such a discipline as he sees most convenient for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, To whom &c.

The End of the THIRD VOLUME.

